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13 June –
26 June 2003
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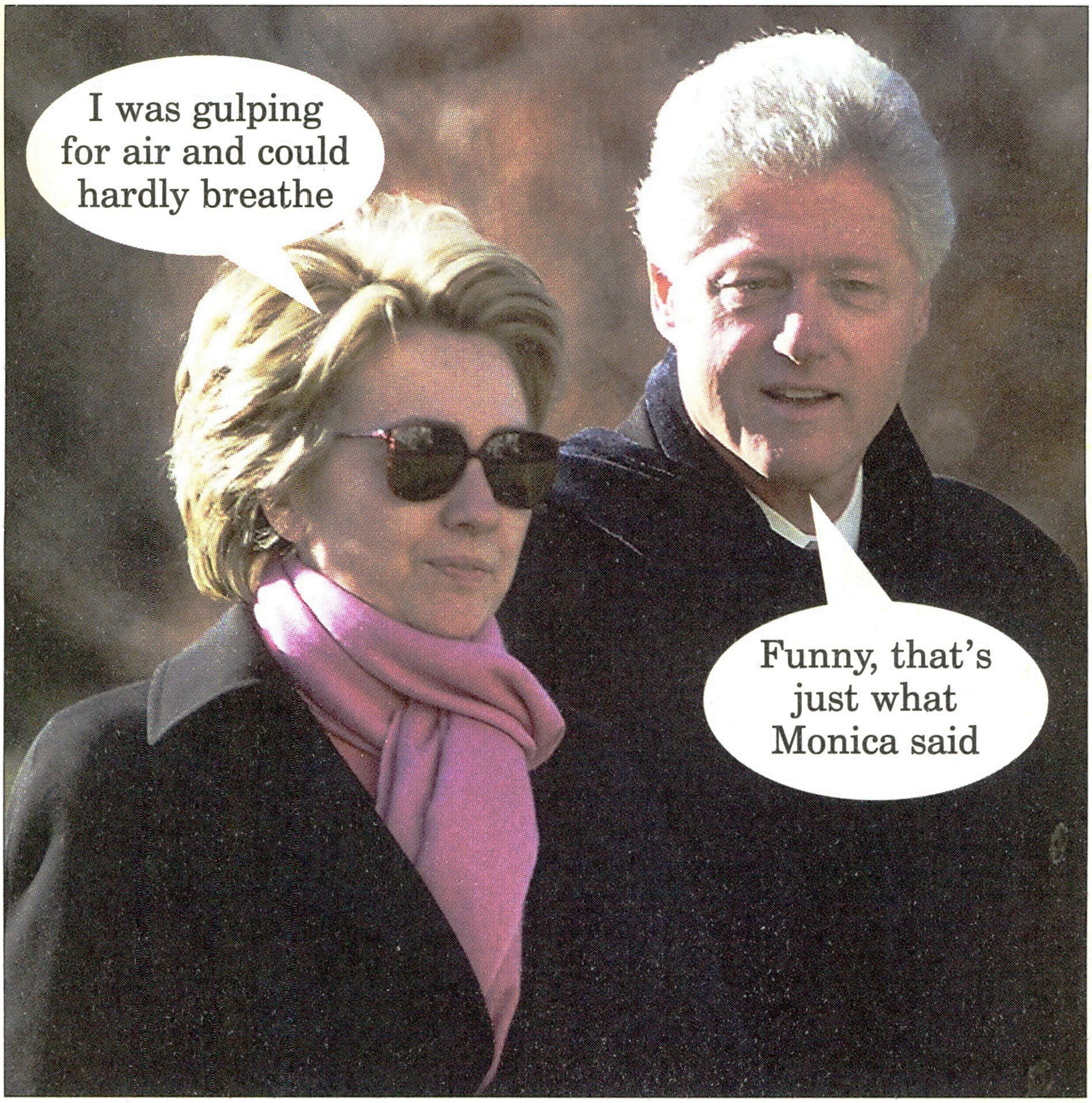
PRIVATE EYE

HILLARY CLINTON MEMOIRS SHOCK



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UBS is passionate in its support of contemporary art worldwide. We sponsored Tate's recent *Warhol* and *Lucian Freud* exhibitions. Now we are supporting something completely new – *Cruel and Tender: The Real in the Twentieth-Century Photograph,* Tate's first and one of London's largest exhibitions of photographic artists. Come and see how this new collection of photographic art challenges the conventional view of the world. You can't miss it.

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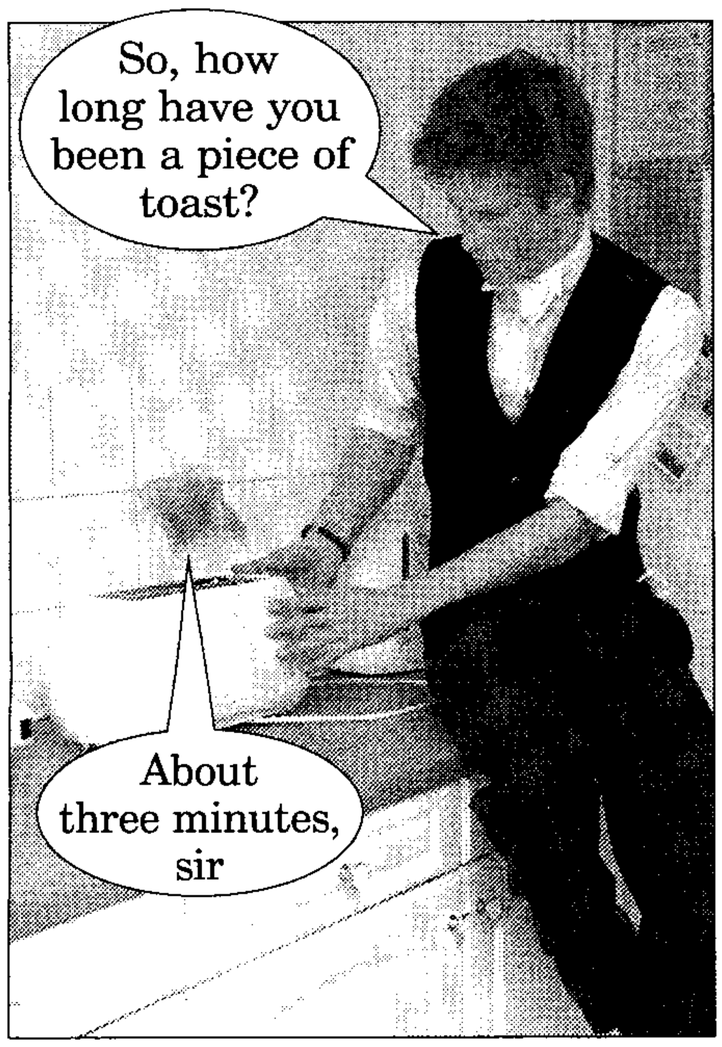
AN APOLOGY

IN COMMON with all other newspapers we may have given the impression that Mr Alastair Campbell had apologised for his so-called dodgy dossier in relation to the Weapons of Mass Destruction. Headlines such as "Campbell Grovels To Spooks", "Comical Ali Says Whoops!" and "The Campbells Are Going Awa! Awa!" may well have led readers to believe that Mr Campbell had issued a formal apology for his role in "sexing up" Mr Blair's vital dossier, originally entitled "No Weapons Here" and subsequently released as "45 Minutes To Armageddon".

We would now like to apologise to Mr Campbell for referring to his apology as an apology. We are happy to accept his assurances that it was in fact a clarification or possibly a statement of regret, but that it was in no way an apology. Obviously.

E. Strobes, pp Lord Gnome,
Gnome International Newspapers.

PRINCE HARRY COMES OF AGE



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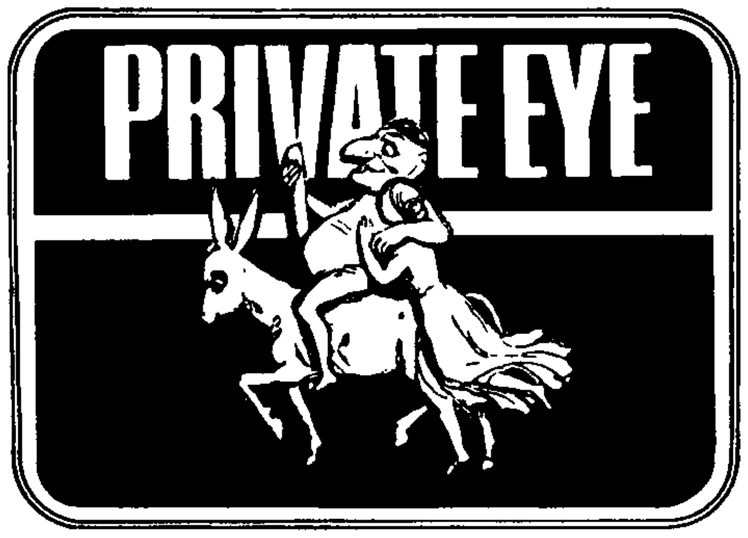

MORE on the canvas-sided Iraqi military trailers George W. Bush and Tony Blair insist were mobile germ labs, but which expert opinion believes were more likely to have carried equipment to generate hydrogen for the inflation of weather balloons.

The balloons were used by the Iraqi artillery to help with targeting; and even the CIA has now admitted that the balloons explanation is a "plausible cover story".

Coalition forces know the Iraqi army used hydrogen weather balloons because Britain sold Saddam Hussein artillery weather balloon kit in 1987 – the £10m "AMETS" system from Marconi – and the sale was covered by the UK's export credit guarantee department (ECGD).

AMETS – aka the Artillery Meteorological System – comprises weather balloons and radar devices and is housed in trucks and a trailer. Funnily enough, the British government had to use its own "plausible cover story" to ensure the sale went ahead.

When the deal was proposed, the ECGD had used up its military budget; so the ministry of defence reclassified the contract as civilian, pretending that AMETS was to be used by harmless Iraqi weather forecasters.

PS: When Saddam defaulted on the deal, British taxpayers wrote Marconi a cheque for £8.2m.

THE hysteria in the government about weapons of mass destruction has reached fever pitch.

In a circular to universities, the foreign office introduces its "voluntary vetting scheme", the aim of which is to prevent any foreign student coming to Britain who might want to learn how to make weapons of mass destruction.

A list of 10 "countries of concern" is helpfully provided. They are Cuba, Egypt, India, Iran, Iraq, Israel, Libya, North Korea, Pakistan and Syria. But where is Saudi Arabia? The former home of Osama bin Laden and umpteen of the student aged 11 September hijackers, is not there.

The foreign office also supplies a list of subjects, including maths and ceramics, which are considered likely points of danger. So any college which gets an application from anyone in any of the 10 countries who wants to study any of the disciplines is "invited" to leak the information to a special department of the foreign office, which will then seek either to ban or spy on the student.

WHAT a heroic figure Neil Kinnock is! Not for him the easy option of taking a peerage and collecting a few quangoships when he retires as vice-president of the European commission next year. Instead, he tells an interviewer, he plans to become a roving crusader against corruption and injustice, speaking up for people "who don't have much of a voice".

One of these voiceless people might be Marta Andreasen, the former chief accounting officer of the European commission, whose attempt to blow the whistle on fraud and dodgy financial practices earned her a draconian gagging order, disciplinary proceedings and suspension from her job.

Then again, maybe not. The man who went to such extraordinary lengths to bully Andreasen into silence was none other than Commissioner Kinnochio himself.

● *See Brussels Sprouts p.6.*

It's Hillarious...

■ **Richard Desmond: Who's still a dirty boy?** 4
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AS anyone with a letterbox knows, Barclaycard is quite fond of sending out direct mail advertising, aka junk mail.

Barclaycard chief executive Bob Potts, however, appears to be no big fan of the stuff. One small firm recently sent a mail-out to companies in the financial sector. Homing pigeon-like, one of the letters found its way back to the business marked: "Return to sender, please remove from mailing list."

The name and address on the envelope? Mr J.R. Potts, CEO, Barclaycard.

THE recent issue of the *Eye* carrying a special supplement on the sale of tax and customs buildings to a company in a tax haven hit the streets on 27 May. On 28 May the chairman of HM Customs and Excise (HMCE), Richard Broadbent, announced his unexpected retirement so that he could spend more time with private enterprise.

Some *Eye* readers saw this as a bit more than coincidence. But the *Eye*'s burgeoning sources in within customs suggest otherwise.

If Mr Broadbent's departure is linked in some way to a disaster at HMCE, these sceptics believe it is more likely that he was brought down by the bonded warehouse scandal, exposed in *Eye* 1075 and on which Mr Justice Butterfield is expected to pronounce shortly.

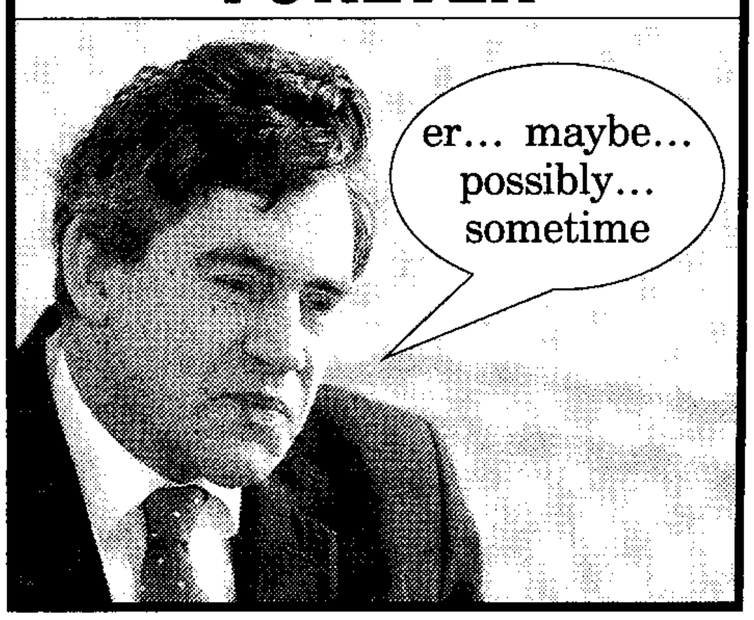
● *More unusual customs, page 26*

AID workers are puzzled by the gun amnesty introduced by the US authorities in Iraq.

Not only does it allow Iraqis to keep their handguns, but it allows them to hang on to their old Kalashnikovs as well – even though they can fire 600 rounds a minute and are of huge concern to coalition troops there.

Back home, George W. Bush has just backed the 1994 Clinton bill which banned these same weapons in the US.

THAT HISTORIC DECISION ON THE EURO THAT WILL CHANGE OUR LIVES FOREVER



NEWS

PLENTY of health trusts face rising debts and trouble with balance sheets, but few have taken such drastic measures as to sell their hospitals out from underneath themselves.

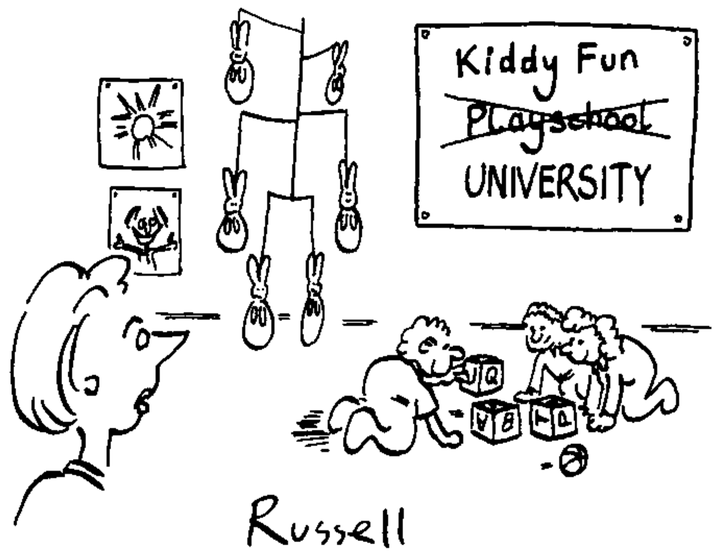
The Oxford Radcliffe Hospitals NHS Trust (ORH) sold Radcliffe Infirmary to Oxford University in April for around £40m. The move may have cleared the trust's £20m debts, but is blatantly short termist as even the hospital's managers now estimate they could easily have run up a similar deficit by the same time next year.

Most of the cash raised by the sale will be immediately handed to Thames Valley health authority to pay off the trust's debt. The regional authority, covering Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire, has predicted that the NHS region as a whole will be £50m in debt by next March.

The ORH trust was planning to move services based at the Infirmary to a new PFI site in Headingley in 2007 anyway, but will now have to pay rent to the university for the next four years – helping it run up even more debt. After that, the university, which already does some research at the site, will take over the building.

Patients' watchdog Oxfordshire community health council has complained to health secretary Alan Milburn about the secrecy in which the sale was arranged and asked why it was not put up for public tender to get the best possible price.

Meanwhile, a report by PricewaterhouseCoopers, the consultants called in to fathom out why the debts were so high, highlights poor accounting, inexperienced managers and informal decision making within the trust. But ORH has also pointed up the high cost of having to take on expensive agency nurses to meet government targets. Had a copy of the PwC report not been leaked to the local paper, the *Oxford Mail*, the hospital would have been sold before the information about the debts was revealed.



"Labour is desperate to reach its 50% target"

AN 18-month Office of Fair Trading (OFT) investigation has ended with Capita having to hand over information on its computing systems to other software companies.

The move, made on the basis of a voluntary assurance to the OFT, will mean that other computing firms will at last be able to produce systems that can work in tandem with the Capita SIMS system. Capita will have to inform the OFT of any changes to its system in the future that might interfere with how other companies' software works.

Capita SIMS is used in around 22,000 schools for monitoring attendance and recording other administrative data. Until now programmers have not been able to get the necessary information to make their own systems compatible with the Capita one, a position which – given Capita's dominance in the education sector – meant other software firms didn't get a look in.

The OFT said there had been no breach of competition law but that the case would probably be reopened if Capita did not stick to the assurance.

Street of Shame

"THE government are to be congratulated on their move to establish a register of men convicted of domestic assaults. The *Sun* will do all it can to encourage the register's success. Bullying beasts must be exposed for what they are."

Thus spake Rebekah Wade's *Sun* as it gravely embarked on a campaign against domestic violence. And quite right too. The only question that might be asked is why the Currant Bun had spent the previous month lionising uber-lad, *I'm a Celebrity* winner and ex-cricketer Phil Tufnell.

Surely it can't have forgotten its own shock and outrage in 1994 when Tufnell was convicted of "actual bodily harm and common assault" after beating up an ex-girlfriend?

LAST week's *Sunday Express* devoted a double-page spread to an investigation into how the UK seaside was being turned into "sleazeside" by an invasion of "harcore sex shops, topless lapdancing bars and mucky shows".

Reporters were dispatched to Margate, Hove, Blackpool and Bournemouth where they found shocking evidence of depavity in "the clubs which scar our once genteel seaside resorts". "For £20 any of the 12m visitors who make Blackpool the North's most popular destination can hire a young girl to strip and perform a lewd act in front of them," reported an outraged Paul McMullan, while overleaf the paper's leader column thundered that "many of our seaside towns have always had a racy side but some are becoming downright sleazy".

Of course, wise *Sunday Express* readers know that they don't need to go all the way to the seaside to fill up on sleaze. They can simply subscribe to the Fantasy Channel – "the hardest action available on UK TV" – or pick up a copy of Mega Boobs, Horny Housewives, Big Ones or 40 Plus, all of which are part of the pornographic media empire owned by Richard Desmond, publisher of the *Daily* and *Sunday Express*. They are all no doubt readily available in all the sex shops advertised – sorry, exposed – in the paper's investigation.

DESPITE his best efforts to attain respectability, Richard Desmond just can't avoid the reputation for smut attached to him and his Northern & Shell corporation.

As counsel for *Hello!* said during the case brought by Catherine Zeta Jones and Michael Douglas, "Northern & Shell's business, to put it bluntly, is pornography".

So whatever happened to Dirty Des's promise to divest himself of his porn empire? Not a lot, is the answer. If anything, Dirty Des appears to be embarking on a campaign of expansion. Northern & Shell has now applied for licences for six more "adult" channels to join the seven that already feature on the BSkyB platform.

Curiously, however, Des continues to get very angry indeed if he's ever described as a porn baron.

"HYPOCRITES", yelled the *Daily Mail*'s front page last Thursday, above a picture of a police patrol-car parked on double yellow lines while its crew operated a speed trap.

"It is a sight to infuriate the most law-abiding of drivers," the paper fulminated. Had the police nothing better to do than "eagerly trying to ensnare speeding motorists"?

Luckily, the *Mail* has indignation to spare. So there was still some left a few pages later when it lambasted magistrates for giving a mere £250 fine to a driver who had killed a woman while "travelling at 60mph on a wet and windy night". The *Mail* noted approvingly that Jim Knight MP, in whose constituency the accident happened, wanted to see tougher penalties for reckless drivers to stop them "sticking two fingers up to the law".

This Monday there was another horror-story, about a grandmother who had been killed by a driver speeding at 40mph in a built-up area. "The tragedy, which happened in the early hours of yesterday, is likely to renew calls for a reform of motoring law," predicted the *Mail*, reminding readers of its own campaign to "highlight" lax sentences for dangerous driving.

Meanwhile, back to last Thursday's front-page rant against hypocrites. "Do you know of any other examples of speed trap hypocrisy?" the *Mail* asked. "Call us on 0207 938 3214." Presumably families of the victims of speeding motorists who wish to join the other campaign can use the same number.

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Her body was an absolute temple, she would not put anything into her body that was foreign."

— Royal butler Paul Burrell, responding to claims that at the time of her death Princess Diana was a cocaine-user who was pregnant by Dodi Fayed.

LAST Wednesday's *Sun* had a two-page feature on ITV's witless new show *Drop! The Celebrity* in which a jury decides which D-listers should be chucked out of an aeroplane with a parachute.

But its lengthy guide to the celebs involved – Bobby Davro, Lady Victoria Hervey, Suzanne Dando, "Page 3 legend" Linda Lusardi and other cultural icons – omitted one competitor: Mr Garry Bushell, former TV critic of… the *Sun*. Surely Gal's old colleagues aren't too embarrassed by the way they stabbed him in the back to even mention his name?

MEANWHILE hacks at the *Daily Star* suspect that Garry Bushell may be about to join them, having seen him closeted in the editor's office for two hours last Wednesday.

Plausible enough, since the self-styled "Gal Gonad" is a chum of Dirty Des. But *Star* hacks and executives may have to do a bit of forgiving and forgetting.

Bushell's previous defection to the *Daily Star*, a decade ago, ended in insults and litigation after only eight months. He fled back to Wapping complaining that moving to the *Star* from the *Sun* had been like appearing at Wigan Pier after a season at the Albert Hall. He also revealed that "there were more drunks on the *Daily Star* than you see along the Embankment".

One of the many red-faced hacks on the paper who took violent exception to Garry's comment was Peter Hill – who now happens to be the editor.

ANOTHER hot scoop for Black Dog, the *Mail on Sunday*'s political gossip columnist.

"Commons press gallery chairman Chris Moncrieff had the cabinet in stitches when he told a press dinner of the unnamed girl newshound in the gallery whose buttons burst off her tight black dress on to ex-speaker Bernard Weatherill below," he writes. "Dog can reveal that the button-popping gal was Essex girl Karen Gooch, who says: 'I still wear the dress, but the buttons have been reinforced.'" There's even a charming photo of the feisty gal to brighten readers' spirits.

Black Dog is written by *MoS* political editor Simon Walters. And who is the newshound Karen Gooch? She is also known as, er, Mrs Simon Walters. It seems rather ungallant of Black Dog not to mention this fact. Being married to an Essex girl is not something to be ashamed of in these enlightened times, surely?

Number crunching

20p

■ cost of *Daily Mirror* to readers

£200,000

■ cost to Carphone Warehouse of hiring the *Daily Mirror*'s full and uncritical editorial support

THE ramifications of Sara Cox's legal victory over the *People* were being felt all over Fleet Street last weekend. The settlement between the DJ, the paper and Jason Fraser, the paparazzo who photographed her naked on a private beach and in a hotel spa during her honeymoon, was a clear signal to the tabloid press that it must put a stop to its intrusive ways – for almost a full 24 hours.

"S RUB HEAVEN" screeched the following day's *Daily Mirror*, which devoted most of its front page and the whole of page three to exclusive pictures from the Cruise Pictures agency of ex-S Club singer Rachel Stevens and her fiancé sunbathing in the grounds of "a luxury hotel on Spain's Costa Del Sol".

"It was nice to see them looking so relaxed," said an onlooker of the couple (though he may have been talking about the *Mirror*'s legal team). The following day's *Sunday Mirror* carried long-lens shots from the Marr agency of model Naomi Campbell and her boyfriend on a boat during a Mediterranean cruise, but they could not compete with the feast offered by the *People* itself.

"STREET TRACY QUITS BRITAIN — STORY AND TOPLESS PICTURES, PAGE 3" yelled the paper's front page, which followed up its scoop in getting a grainy shot of actress Tracy Shaw's breasts with a thoughtful and measured response to its legal defeat: a "sexy 8-page start-of-the-summer sizzling pullout CELEBRITY BEACH BABES" supplement containing paparazzi pics of female celebrities in various states of undress.

The shots were credited to 11 different agencies, including that of Jason Fraser. Meanwhile his co-defendant, ex-*People* editor Neil Wallis, now deputy at the *News of The World*, could only manage a series of pictures of Jordan, Dwight Yorke and their baby on a beach "on the paradise island of Barbados".

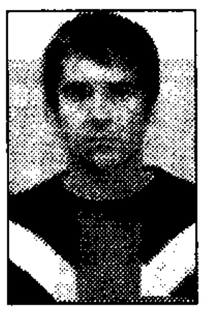
Fraser's real moment of glory came on Monday morning, however, when he bagged some pictures of Paul and Heather McCartney and sold them to every newspaper that would take them, on condition they printed his usual prominent credit in bold capitals. Perhaps thinking the legal precedent just applied to the one photographer, most editors played safe with their captions. "They walked on to a public beach used by dog-walkers and joggers and jumped from rocks into the clear blue waters of the Med," reported the *Sun*, while the *Mirror* did everything but provide a map to prove that the pictures were taken without trespass.

Paranoia was most evident at the *Mail*, however, which devoted as much space to establishing the public nature of the beach where the photographs were taken as it did to actually describing the McCartneys – three paragraphs detailed the views of a "fellow guest", who pointed out that "they are quite open about it, because to get to the beach they have to follow one of the main public paths used by the locals. It is a popular walking spot, especially at weekends, and they are instantly recognisable. But they had no problem sharing their affection publicly."

How could anyone possibly object?

HACKWATCH

Dominic Mohan



WHATEVER happened to Emma Jones, the former *Smash Hits* editor hired by David Yelland as the *Sun*'s voice of yoof, who instantly established herself as the World's Worst Columnist?

The answer is that she was sacked as soon as Rebekah Wade took charge. But who could succeed her? One lesson of the Emma Jones fiasco was that gormless pop-biz hacks don't necessarily have anything intelligent or amusing to say about the ways of the world. So Rebekah chose... gormless pop-biz hack Dominic Mohan, who after five years of rewriting celebrity puffs in the Bizarre section has now been promoted to assistant editor and given his own "brilliant new column", as the paper likes to call it.

After only a few weeks in the job, Mohan has already proved himself a worthy successor to the World's Worst Columnist. But there's one difference: instead of peddling himself as the voice of yoof, Mohan decided for some reason to become the voice of Victor Meldrew...

10 May: Prompted by the news that the government may ban smoking in restaurants, Dominic kicks off the brilliant new column by trying his hand at humour. "I don't know about you," he writes, "but I'm seeing a lot more fatties on the streets these days – and it's no coincidence that you're more likely to see them holding a Yorkie than a ciggie. So I'm writing to health secretary Alan Milburn and his chums with a proposal. If the government is so concerned with the nation's health, I think ministers should outlaw EATING in restaurants and cafes." Geddit?!

Alas, this blizzard of hilarity soon ceases, as Meldrewishness sets in. "My local boozer has had a refurb," Mohan grumbles, "and all its charming original windows have been replaced by frosted glass advertising the pub's website." Nor is he impressed by a survey claiming that 94 percent of adults like to have sex outdoors on bank holidays. "Do people really bonk their way through bank holidays?" the old curmudgeon mutters. "I just drink, argue and sleep."

17 May: Mohan applauds the Tories' proposal to scrap tuition fees – but hastily adds a Meldrewish caveat. "Don't get me wrong, I don't want to pay for Kevin the Teenager to smoke dope for three years and study skateboarding." And yet, oddly enough, Dominic himself is a bit of a Kevin. During his years at Bizarre he had a giggling obsession with the penis-size of celebs such as Ozzy Osbourne ("he has a great big willy") and Steve Martin ("it's huge"). Three years ago he installed a "tiddler hotline" on which readers could phone in their reports on Jamie Theakston's "little willy". Even now that he's a senior pundit, it seems he can't kick the habit. "Frank Sinatra was blessed with such a colossus that he had to wear specially-made pants," he reveals today. "But how does Ol' Blue Eyes measure up against other celebrity doughnut holders? Welcome to Dominic Mohan's Big Willy Guide. My special Hung-ometer reveals who is really big in showbiz – and exposes the bit-part players." Sure enough, there's a tasteful graphic showing comparative lengths of "knobs", with "tiddle-meister" Jamie Theakston at the opposite end from Errol Flynn.

24 May: Encourage a former Bizarre showbiz hack to write like a 94-year-old version of Simon Heffer, and what do you get? A half-page philippic about "the baffling rise" of Justin Timberlake. "Inexplicably, this faceless twerp appears to have become the biggest star on the planet," Dominic splutters into his Wincarnis. "Timberlake isn't a superstar. He has little natural talent and will be forgotten in five years. Just mark my words... He isn't even particularly good-looking... Humourless Timberlake is ordinary, mundane and dull... Where's the X-factor? Where's the wit and sparkle, that something special? I'm sorry, but he ain't got it."

Luckily Mohan doesn't notice that exactly the same could be said of a certain hack who has inexplicably been promoted as one of the *Sun*'s biggest stars. After his tirade against Timberlake, he has just enough energy for a saloon-bar grumble about last week's FA Cup final. "The FA Cup has lost its magic," he harrumphs. "I long for the days of scarf-clad teams being patted on the back as they climb the Wembley steps to the royal box, not waiting for a tinny stage to be put up in the centre circle. Oh, and didn't FA Cup Final day always used to be sunny?"

31 May: Today's sparkling column includes rants against upper-class boys ("nobheads... buffoons"), train-spotters ("anorak-clad spods"), Posh Spice ("she has no natural gift") and glamour model Catalina Guirado, who has annoyed Dominic by looking scruffy in a commercial for a new energy drink. "You'd have thought," he complains, "she could at least have brushed her hair and sorted out those split ends."

Then an old obsession rears its head: "Is solo North Pole trekking fool Pen Hadow's silly name short for penis?" A good question, of course, but it begs another: does Dominic Mohan really not know that he himself is known to unadmiring *Sun* colleagues as Dickhead Moan?

Bring back Emma Jones!

THE NEOPHILIACS

"Saris are the new shoulder pads." — *Daily Telegraph.*

"Arrogance is the new humility." — *New York Times.*

"For go-ahead leaders, 'stop' is the new 'go'." — *Local Government Chronicle.*

"Poetry is the new rap for teenagers." — *SecEd* magazine.

"Skye is the new Azores." — *Financial Times.*

"Cockroaches are the new cats." — Thisislondon.co.uk

"Sailing, the new golf." — *Australian Financial Review.*

"Outdoor heating is the new decking." — *Guardian.*

"Holidays are the new post-coital depression." — *The Times.*

"Is rehab the new gap year?" — *Tatler.*

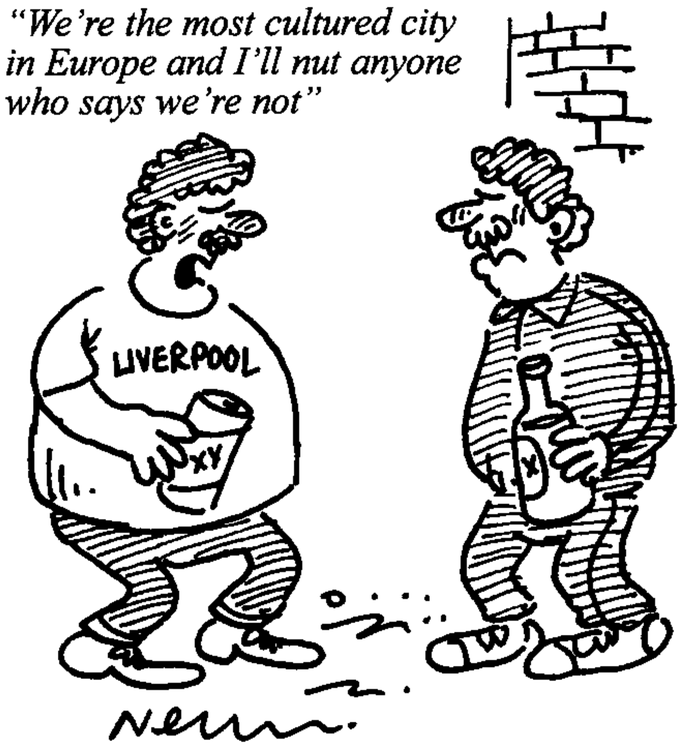
"Is Belgravia the new Beirut?" — *Evening Standard.*

OUT OF CON-TEXT

ADVERTS in London listings magazine *Time Out* promise that the production of *Grease* at the Victoria Palace Theatre was called a "Monster Hit" by the *Daily Mirror*, while those in the *Guardian* attribute the exact same quote to the *Express*.

So which paper did the words appear in? Er, neither. The phrase was used about the musical by both the *Sun* and *Wales On Sunday* in September last year – but not to describe the production. The "monster hit" was the song You're The One That I Want that was released by the stars of the film version of *Grease* and got to number one in 1978.

"We're the most cultured city in Europe and I'll nut anyone who says we're not"



TRANSPORT secretary Alistair Darling found the perfect man to be his permanent secretary: with Tony Blair's help he selected David Rowlands as his new Sir Humphrey.

According to the transport department, Rowlands was responsible for "the successful delivery of Public Private Partnerships for the London Underground and National Air traffic Services". Whoops! The air traffic control privatisation was an utter disaster, bailed out with millions of taxpayers' pounds immediately after the deal. And the tube PPP is a disaster in the making. The jury is still out on Rowlands' third claim to fame: the creation of Railtrack replacement Network Rail.

Darling said Rowlands "brings with him a formidable experience and reputation on transport". Sadly it's a formidably bad reputation. And as industry secretary Patricia Hewitt considers reigning in "rewards for failure" on company boards, perhaps she should stop Whitehall rewarding failure too.

IN HIS firebrand days as leader of Sheffield council, David Blunkett was happy to portray his area as "The Socialist Republic". One of its proudest institutions was Northern College, often referred to as "The Ruskin of the North".

Funded by local councils and the national union of mineworkers, the college, established in a palatial mansion between Sheffield and Barnsley, was set up to give working-class folk a second chance at the education denied to them by poverty and circumstance. So when it celebrated 30 years of this noble work on Saturday 31 May, the home secretary was invited to grace the occasion.

Alas, Blunkett was unable to make it, although the college's former administrator, Mo Mowlam, did. Blunkett's apologies, read out to an incredulous gathering of the faithful, explained that he was in Monaco with his two sons to attend the grand prix the following day.

LOCAL government minister Nick Raynsford was delighted when Brian Pomeroy was appointed chair of the audit commission, the body that oversees local government spending.

He had an "impressive list of senior posts in a range of organisations, both private and public", and he inspired great confidence, the minister said.

Pomeroy will get £15,000 a year for a four-day month chairing the audit commission. His other main post brings him £33,852 a year as part-time chairman of the national lottery commission.

He served as a lottery commissioner of course when the organisation descended into farce as, in 2000, it chose Richard Branson's People's Lottery only to see Camelot hang on to its monopoly by overturning the decision in the courts. Good to know that running the lottery balls-up is the sort of thing that inspires confidence in government ministers.

ON 20 May Howard Davies, chairman of the financial services authority (FSA), spoke out against the auditing standards of big accountancy firms.

"We know that in recent years auditors have allowed their public interest role to be forgotten, in the US and elsewhere. There is a need for stronger oversight of the profession, nationally and internationally, with greater public interest involvement in the process."

Six days earlier, on 14 May, the financial reporting council announced the names of the working group that will provide a revised code on corporate governance. Among other things, the code will decide what auditors can and can't do for companies. The eight members of the group include three industrialists, one insurance magnate, one media mogul, one city lawyer, one merchant banker and a top accountant. The public interest will be represented by, er, no one.

"TODAY Brent South; tomorrow Soweto" was the unforgettable declaration of Paul Boateng the night he was elected to parliament as Labour MP for Brent South in 1987.

But Boateng soon dispensed with the gaudy garland he was wearing on that occasion, as well as the cumbersome leftwing baggage he had carried with him as a GLC councillor. After 1997 he quickly became a star in the "new" Labour government, and as chief secretary to the treasury was the first black cabinet minister.

On 29 May Mr Boateng did indeed go to Soweto, or rather to Johannesburg where he made a major speech to all sorts of important people. His central theme was the glorious triumph of... the private finance initiative (PFI) in Britain, especially in hospitals.

Somehow his speech, and his glamorous video presentation, gave the impression that PFI hospitals in Britain have been universally successful. There was no mention of the consequent cuts in hospital beds (cf Worcester, Durham, Halifax) or the gigantic increases in cost as in Edinburgh... or the widespread hostility to PFI from almost all the unions involved.

Number crunching

104 mph

■ speed reached by ambulance driver delivering organ for transplant for which he is being prosecuted

103 mph

■ speed reached by Jack Straw when late for Labour party meeting for which he was not prosecuted

ON SALE at the Lib Dems online bookstore is David Black's *All the First Minister's Men*, which examines the immense money-sink that is the plan to give the Scottish parliament a shiny new home.

By virtue of being part of the ruling coalition in Scotland, the Lib Dems are of course partially culpable for the whole £338m, two-and-a-half year late debacle. In a burst of refreshing honesty – or perhaps just plain book-salesmanship – the website's blurb for the book says: "The jinxed attempt to create a modern Scottish Parliament building at Holyrood is one of the most ill-starred episodes in the history of public architecture."

Hopefully the Lib Dems will remain as open and honest during the investigation launched into the whole mess by the European commission last month.

HOT ON the heels of Ordnance Survey's plans to contract work to India (*Eye* 1080), the mapping agency's nautical sister organisation is moving much of its work into the private sector too.

The UK Hydrographics Office (UKHO), which currently operates as a government-owned trading fund, is working on contracting out its IT services, some administration, archive management and possibly (depending on MoD approval) site security. It also wants to privatise its property management, much as the Inland Revenue did so successfully [*sic*] when it sold its property in order to be able to rent it back again. (Hopefully someone at UKHO will read the *Eye*'s special report on this tax-dodging sale of 600 buildings to a firm in a tax haven.)

At present every hydrographics office in the world is state-run; and so far there's no plan to contract out the actual mapping. But if the OS can have its maps produced by Danish company Kampsax's staff in Delhi, who's to say UKHO won't follow suit?

MARK SMITH, the civil servant who has been trying for weeks to correct one of the Inland Revenue's many tax credit errors (even though it's in his favour) writes to update the *Eye* on his latest efforts.

Mr Smith and his wife declared a combined income of around £30,000 which somehow showed up as zero on the IR's assessment. That led to a monthly award of more than £500 – about 10 times more than they expected to receive in child tax benefit.

Mr Smith eventually got through to the revenue's helpline to find that he was talking to a call-centre that took messages only. The following Sunday morning he was – to his great amazement – eventually called back by someone from the IR, who confirmed his records indeed showed the couple were earning £30,000. The reason this showed up as zero on the award notice may have been because it was "not properly scanned", she said.

The caller advised that there would now be a revised tax credit of £42 a month. But when Mr Smith got his bank statement, he found he had been paid £540. He got back on the phone (no easy task) and this time he was told he was entitled to £85.09 of the £540 and could he please put the balance on one side until asked to make a refund.

Last week he received a third award notice saying he was now entitled to £138.91 a month. This time the incompetents at the IR appear to have omitted one of the two incomes. "I have decided to give up trying to point out the error of their ways and am now prepared to take whatever money they want to throw at me," he told the *Eye*.

BRUSSELS SPROUTS

NEIL KINNOCK has been banging on about injustice, but he is meanwhile pushing through a cut in pension benefits for all Eurocrats and forcing them to work up to three years more to obtain a full pension. Surprise, surprise, he and other commissioners will face no such pain.

Vice-President Kinnock will retire on a pension based on an unchanged 4.5 percent of his salary for each year. Eurocrats will now get only 1.9 percent down from 2 percent. But unlike the 8.25 percent paid by lesser Eurocrats, Kinnock makes no contribution to his generous pension – worth 45 percent of his current £163,453 salary after 10 years, plus a 50 percent boost if he returns to the UK as its cost of living is higher than Brussels.

Meanwhile, perhaps he will understand that Eurocrats were not surprised to see Janet Royall, appointed to the top commission job in Wales, heading the EC office in Cardiff. Royall worked in Kinnock's private office when he was Labour leader and then followed him to Brussels, working finally in the EC press office for which Kinnock is responsible,

According to one unsuccessful applicant for the Welsh post, he was told it had always been pencilled in for the politically ambitious Royall. She was parachuted in this year after what Eurocrats suspect was a "concours Bidon" – a phoney competition for which the winner is already known. Perhaps these should now be renamed "concours Kinnock" after the crusader against corruption and injustice?

'Backbiter'

TORIES IN BONDAGE

LAST month's bonding weekend in Buckinghamshire for Conservative MPs didn't produce the plotting and leadership challenges hacks had predicted.

Most Tory MPs, when not playing pinball in the hotel bar, were far too busy gossiping about the presence of political journalist Peter Kellner, who delivered a keynote speech on how the Conservatives can win the next election – even though Kellner himself is a lifelong member of the Labour party and indeed married to a Labour minister.

Why would he wish to help the enemy? Simple: Kellner is also chairman of the online polling company YouGov, whose grip on IDS's party is beginning to alarm some senior Tories.

YouGov was founded three years ago by Nadhim Zahawi and Stephan Shakespeare (a name presumably adopted for its Englishness, in preference to his real name, Kukowski). Both were Conservative candidates at the 1997 election and then served as acolytes-in-chief to Jeffrey Archer during his ill-fated mayoral campaign. Zahawi is deemed too controversial to be let out in public very often, but Shakespeare was everywhere at the bonding weekend.

MPs wondering why IDS should take advice from Archer groupies, and why YouGov has overnight become the party's oracle, need look no further than the Conservative party's new communications supremo, Paul Baverstock, whom Shakespeare has been heard tearily describing as "my best friend in the whole world".

Until four years ago Baverstock was an ambitious Blairite: standing as a Labour candidate for Wandsworth in the 1998 local elections he promised to "work tirelessly to try and prevent the Conservatives further cutting spending on our schools". But he defected to the Tories in 1999 after being appointed chief operating officer of Bell Pottinger, the political consultancy run by Thatcher's old PR man, Lord "Flasher" Bell. (Bell is also now working for the Tories again, and spoke alongside Kellner at the bonding weekend.)

Baverstock persuaded Bell to make a hefty investment in YouGov, and worked so hard at promoting YouGov's interests that when the internet pollsters got a meeting with the then party chairman David Davis, Baverstock and Shakespeare went together to pitch for business – though without success.

But in January this year Baverstock left Bell Pottinger for the top job at Conservative Central Office, and YouGov's fortunes improved at once. He began pushing work the company's way and inviting Shakespeare to "strategy meetings". Within a month, Baverstock had fired the party's respected research director, Rick Nye, and put himself in charge of the party's polling.

YouGov's revenue and influence have grown ever since, by the simple expedient of telling IDS whatever he wants to hear. As Shakespeare boasted to *PR Week*: "We ask the questions our clients request us to".

It was YouGov who persuaded Iain Duncan Cough that a promise to scrap tuition fees would win over floating voters. So the only person more distressed than Cough was Stephan Shakespeare when the next published poll – by the party's former pollsters ICM – showed Tory support down, and Labour's lead unmoved on 12 percent.

A panicked Shakespeare did his own poll, which duly found that, on the contrary, Tory support was up to its highest level for a decade and Labour's lead had fallen to a paltry 2 percent. These amazing results were transmitted to the pagers of every Tory MP. But cynicism is already setting in: one group of MPs, reading the pager message in a Commons bar, broke into the spontaneous chorus: "Of course – AnythingYouWantGuv".

If – or rather when – the IDS regime meets its doom, one can guess where Baverstock will look for his next job. The now considerably more affluent YouGov will no doubt be waiting with open arms to show its appreciation for all his support – though the same probably can't be said for Tory MPs, who are none too amused to see their party being led towards the precipice by a company whose ruling triumvirate consists of a Labour loyalist and two cronies of a jailed perjurer.

WMD: THE POT AND THE KETTLE

THE idea that Tony Blair might have lied about Iraq's weapons of mass destruction has caused outrage in every newspaper. Doesn't the government know that making up spurious scare stories is their job?

"INQUIRY MUST FIND OUT IF WE WERE TOLD WAR TRUTH" was the headline on an *Express* leader. But perhaps its own hacks could volunteer some evidence of the "large underground laboratory complex in Iraq which has begun to produce a virus that mimics foot-and-mouth disease" which they reported last September.

The *Mail* could also help out: it knows a thing or two about "intelligence sources", having quoted one of its own last August who claimed that "Iraq is developing an underground biological weapons laboratory about a hundred miles north of Baghdad – it is said to have 85 employees producing the deadly Ebola virus".

The *Times*, meanwhile, had some specific criticism. "Arguably, there was too much reliance on the reports from defectors," its leader column pontificated. That would be defectors like Adnan Saeed al-Haideri, whose "first-hand knowledge of more than 30 secret biological weapons laboratories inside Iraq" the paper recounted at length last July (despite rubbishing the same claims as vague, unverified and biased when al-Haideri first made them in 2001).

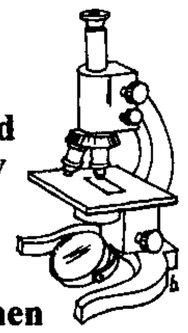
The *Telegraph* had also reevaluated al-Haideri by 17 November when his claims were backed up by "US spy plane missions" which "detect underground voids – such as bunkers and tunnels – through variations in the earth's gravitational field". Unfortunately this hi-tech method appears to have been less reliable than the digging and looking that has been going on since, because nothing has been found.

Another Iraqi defector's revelations, however, struggled for space. General Hussein Kamal, Saddam's son-in-law, defected to the west in 1995. He formerly ran Iraq's WMD programme and exposed these programmes to the weapons inspectors. He was later tempted back to Iraq and assassinated.

In an extraordinary scoop, John Barry in *Newsweek* got hold of a copy of the transcript of Kamal's interview with the weapons inspectors this January – including the revelation that Kamal claimed the chemical and biological agents had in fact been destroyed. As Kamal's revelations about Iraq's past WMD programme are central to all claims about Saddam's arsenal – his evidence informs every dossier, his name is still cited by Jack Straw – this was a major story. The *Guardian*, *Independent* and *Mirror* slowly gave small space to the story (long after *Newsweek* published it in the UK). But the more credulous *Times*, *Telegraph*, *Mail* and *Express* have yet to let their readers know that Iraq's top defector actually told the west there were no remaining stocks of WMDs.

"It looks harmless, Bond, but it blows up in your face"

UNDER THE MICROSCOPE



THE Cassandras said it would never happen. But last Monday Britain's biggest contribution to space exploration finally got off the ground. Beagle 2, a small robotic lander the size of a kitchen barbecue, was launched on its way to Mars into the sultry skies over Baikonur, Kazakhstan.

Back in London the boffins applauded a rather sheepish-looking Lord Sainsbury, who had come up with substantial quantities of government cash for the project – but only after heavy arm-twisting by Colin Pillinger, the man behind Beagle 2. Initially Sainsbury said not one penny would be forthcoming for this quirky but audacious project.

Beagle was lucky, because projects to discover life on Mars and other such esoteric quests are not flavour of the month when it comes to funding. Last summer British scientists were told they were to receive a welcome cash injection of £1.25bn extra per year by 2006 from the government, the first new monies coming on stream about now.

In his recent budget Gordon Brown trumpeted his government's commitment to science, singling out Britain's lead in stem cell research, which may lead to new cures for cancers and other diseases.

But Britain's scientists are not all laughing all the way to the bank – and it is precisely that commitment to stem cell research that highlights a fundamental problem with the way science funding is developing in Britain.

The government seems to have taken upon itself to decide which areas of science are to deemed most "useful" to society as a whole, and particularly to the economy. And it is for research into these areas that the seven research councils are being told to ring-fence large wedges of this extra cash.

For example, in the wake of the foot and mouth disaster, the BSE shambles, worries over salmon farming and so on, the government has decided that rural science is a priority, and has leant on the research councils to award grants accordingly. Similarly, stem cell research – which no one denies has extraordinary potential – is being elevated over other, less sexy but, who knows, one day more profitable lines of inquiry.

For good reasons the government has up to now kept itself at arm's length from science funding decisions, allowing the scientists to decide for themselves what is most useful. Some people say this allows ivory-tower boffins to waste tax-payers' money on "blue sky" research, but the history of science is that of such apparently arcane endeavours leading to economically valuable results.

One of the best recent examples is that of "monoclonal antibodies", which are now used to treat heart disease, cancer, arthritis and organ rejection, and are worth billions of dollars a year. But their existence is due to a research council project that was funded purely because it was scientifically interesting – not because anyone had any idea it would be economically or medically "useful".

Of course, events throw up areas of research that need to be tackled urgently. Should beef-on-the-bone be banned? What's the risk from SARS? What should we do with animals that have been in contact with foot-and-mouth? But it is the government departments that are – rightly – tasked with carrying out these studies with dedicated teams of scientists, not the research councils.

The danger is that by ring-fencing funding to specific areas of research that are either fashionable (stem cells), politically expedient (rural research) or both, you end up with second-rate and out-of-date science. And you may also miss out on imaginative projects like Beagle 2 which may not have any commercial applications but might just awaken the interest of the next generation's Albert Einstein.

After years of woeful underinvestment, any new money is welcome; but unless the tradition if maintained of scientists deciding what science is, much of that money will effectively end up being thrown down the laboratory plughole.

'Boffin'

FOCUS ON SNOOKER

In their pockets

FORGET reality TV: the most enduring television success story is snooker, which still topples regular crowd-pleasers from their usual slots on BBC2. With such a guaranteed audience, you'd think sponsors would be hammering at the doors of the World Professional Billiards and Snooker Association.

They would certainly be welcome. In the 2002 accounts, WPBSA's assets were down to £637,631; and since then it has suffered the loss through anti-tobacco legislation of sponsors Regal and Benson & Hedges. Embassy, which supplied the prize fund of £1,682,900 for last month's world championship, has a special exemption until 2005 because the government thought this would dispel the suspicion of one-off special treatment for Bernie Ecclestone and Formula One.

Ray Reardon in his playing days

Snooker has only one non-tobacco sponsor secured for next season, LG Electronics. Why are other companies so reluctant to come forward? Could it be that they are put off by the reputation of the WPBSA, which is described by one respected snooker figure as "a seething antheap of petty corruption and dirty tricks"? And by the continued influence of two directors, Jim McMahon and former world champion Joe Johnson, who were severely criticised by an official inquiry into the previous regimes of Geoff Foulds and Rex Williams?

Foulds met his Waterloo in 1997 when he had to pay £750,000 libel costs after the *Mirror* successfully defended its allegation that he had abused the WPBSA's expenses system – claiming, for example, travel expenses of £150 for meetings at Wembley (2.8 miles from his Perivale home) and Chiswick (5.6 miles). Foulds's successor, former world billiards champion Rex Williams, decided to improve the association's public face by recruiting a member of the great and the good as president. He chose… Lord Archer of Weston-Super-Mare, who hospitably entertained snooker luminaries at his penthouse flat and invoiced the WPSBA for the cost of the lunch.

Williams set about running the WPBSA as his private fiefdom and using its money to gag his critics with libel actions. After two years of strife, he resigned on the eve of a September 1999 EGM to remove him. The new administration commissioned a report from Mark Gay, a prominent sports lawyer, who was scathing about "the manner in which the Williams regime chose to deal with its critics" through constant litigation – seven libel actions which were ultimately withdrawn, and three others which were lost.

Gay also found a culture of cronyism – notably in the appointment of former world champion Ray Reardon as chairman of a coaching committee composed of Williams loyalists whose own fees and expenses consumed almost the entire coaching budget (£49,348). "There is always a danger of paid appointments being used as political patronage," he commented, noting the "interesting relationship between voting behaviour and receipt of grants in the case of voting members".

Williams and Reardon were expelled from the WPBSA. Their fellow-director Jim McMahon, a driving instructor from Glasgow, was given 14 days to resign and told to repay money which had been used to fight a personal libel action. McMahon talked the board round, however, and a few months later the memberships of Williams and Reardon were restored. McMahon has not only survived on the board but become its chairman in all but name. Joe Johnson, who was co-opted *after* the board knew about Gay's criticisms of him, also remains there.

Their best-known fellow-director is Tony Knowles, a former world no 2 whose lurid sexual boastings in the 1980s led to him being fined £5,000 for bringing the game into disrepute. When a former girlfriend alleged that he had sometimes hit her, he tried to repair his image by giving an interview to Noreen Taylor of the *Daily Mirror*. Alas! Within minutes he was talking about "that bloody bitch who told all them lies about me… If I saw her I'd crack her one on the jaw". For good measure, he then told the interviewer: "Hey, why don't we go to bed? I'll tell you everything you want to know about them girls." Taylor, who has been happily married for many years to Roy Greenslade, made her excuses and left.

Knowles's business record is as erratic as his love life. *Eye* readers with long memories may recall Framework Management Ltd, the company he set up in partnership with music-biz impresario Howard Kruger, which lost £84,000 in its first two years of trading and was eventually wound up with debts of £461,000 (*Eye* 736). Kruger, himself a former WPBSA board member, was disqualified for five years from serving as a company director.

Tony Knowles Snooker Promotions Ltd was wound up on application of the Inland Revenue in 2000, thus suffering the same fate as Trickshots Ltd in 1996 and Tee K's, his Bolton snooker club, in 1997. Yet the WPBSA clearly thinks he is just the man to add gravitas to its board. In the words of a press release issued last November: "We are delighted that someone of Tony's status has accepted our invitation to become a director."

Yup, snooker is in safe hands. To make them even safer, the board recently decided to offer the vacant WPBSA presidency to… Rex Williams. He declined the invitation, however: "My heart said yes but my head said no." Never mind: it won't be long before former president Jeffrey Archer is available to resume his duties. That should bring the sponsors flocking in.

AD NAUSEAM

THE BIG news in adland is that Honda's much-vaunted TV slot "Cog", in which the individual components of a car set each other in motion domino-style, may not be quite as original as first claimed.

Two Swiss artists have called in the lawyers against agency Wieden & Kennedy, claiming that Cog is bizarrely similar to their own 1997 short film, titled *The Way Things Go…* in which every day objects set each other in motion, domino-style.

The big news for this column is that this is news at all. Many of the most successful adverts of recent years have been flagrant bites from the work of real artists. Volkswagen's launch ads for its Mk IV Golf, which featured boring people holding up signs revealing stirring states of mind, was a rip-off of the work of the artist Gillian Wearing, as VW and its agency BMP DDB eventually conceded.

Levi's Flat Eric campaign took the work of a French techno musician and appended it randomly to a clothing product for cool effect. And most notoriously, the 1995 Guinness "dancer" commercial was bitten wholesale from another short film. The director sued and lost on the grounds of the IP lawyer's mantra that there is no copyright in an idea, only in the embodiment of that idea. But if you saw the film and then the ad it only proved once again that the law is an all-singing, all-dancing ass.

Ad creatives call this inspiration, even sometimes patting themselves on the back for being talented enough to "spot" other people's work, as if a burglar deserves credit for knowing how to break in. The point is that although adland can give it out, it can't take it. Those of you who spotted the undoubted similarity between recent O_2 work and the symbols for Sony Playstation will be delighted to learn that Sony and agency TBWA were so pleased to have offered inspiration that they ran to their lawyers and the ads will not be shown again.

So the Honda creatives currently in the dock can take solace that they are not the first. The only question remaining is whether they nicked the idea from the hapless Swiss duo, or whether it came from the opening sequence of *The Great Egg Race*, an 80s TV programme that began with what appears to Ad Nauseam to be yet another version of this supposedly groundbreaking idea.

9.00 Big Brother
The resident *Big Brother* psychologists evaluate the events of the past week to see how the housemates are baring up.
Radio Times

QUOTE OF THE WEEK

"Tony's on 40. And Patricia, you've got 69 – which is a good position to be in."
— *Richard Whiteley,* Countdown
Channel 4, 5 June

MEDIA NEWS

GREG DYKE's latest idea – "The Big Conversation", aimed at persuading BBC staff to share ideas across departments and suggest ways in which the corporation could be improved – is already paying off judging by the letters page of the in-house paper, *Ariel*.

David Larner, who works in the Orwellian-sounding "Information" department, offers a solution to a problem that has been bothering managers since the "relaunch" of the BBC's news coverage in January: the permanent emptiness of the "virtual newsroom" installed behind the newsreaders' desk at a cost of £1m. While a few passers-by were recruited to mill around looking busy during the week of the relaunch, the cavernous and well-equipped beige space has remained empty ever since, and managers are worried that viewers are going to notice.

So what is Mr Larner's bright, crap-cutting idea? "Why not use the real newsroom like we used to?"

THERE's no doubting the ITV News Channel's appetite for big stories.

On 3 June at the peak time of 7pm, the channel that "puts the drama back into news with an emphasis on live events, breaking news, live pictures and agenda-setting interviews", broadcast a half hour phone-in… on whether Nancy Dell'Olio was right to forgive Sven Goran Eriksson for his affair with Ulrika Jonsson.

ITN-balls

CONTINUING our series on ITN cock-ups, the ITV News at Ten on 2 June managed to caption Sir Christopher Meyer, chairman of the press complaints commission (PCC), as Peter Preston.

Oh, and reports on the recent earthquake in Turkey stated that the country's capital was Istanbul, rather than Ankara.

(Similar submissions gratefully received.)

ANGST at the studios of the *Today* programme, where senior producer Kirsty Mackenzie was bereft at being scooped by *Newsnight* for the first interview with Afghan leader Hamid Karzai on his visit to London.

Her email to colleagues on Friday 6 June says it all…

WHILE it was great to have Karzai on this morning it was pretty disappointing that after many phone calls and several reassurances that ours would be the first British domestic interview, he did, in the end, do Newsnight. I talked to his press man last night... who was very embarrassed and said he had received dozens of calls from Newsnight yesterday evening, after we'd recorded, including he said, from the Editor and, he implied, from Paxman himself... thing is Newsnight somehow found out that we had Karzai... and once they knew that, they stopped at nothing to try to ensure they were not upstaged...

Some of you will know about my experiences with the [South African president] Mbeki interview last weekend whereby, on telling Newsgathering about an impending interview, they told Bush, World TV and then went on to facilitate a World Service radio interview and world TV interview without even the courtesy of telling us they'd sent a crew for a different programme... Mbeki didn't happen for us, as a result...

[Maybe the] rule of thumb should be... if we have someone we know everyone else is chasing... WE DON'T TELL ANYONE ELSE OUTSIDE OF THE PROGRAMME ABOUT IT UNTIL AFTER TX!!! It's really frustrating to see hard work being undermined, after getting poleaxed by our own side!!!

Of course, we got Blix, so nah nah nah nah nah... but nevertheless... thoughts v. welcome.

Kirsty x

DUMB BRITAIN

French Quiz, LBC

Presenter: Which French author has been translated into more languages than any other French author in the world?

Contestant: Chaucer.

Bob Hope Birthday Quiz, LBC

Presenter: Bob Hope was the fifth of how many sons?

Contestant: Four.

Steve Wright's Big Quiz, Radio 2

Wright: What was the animal referred to in Val Doonican's song Paddy McGinty's…?

Contestant: I don't know.

Wright: It begins with a "G".

Contestant: Cow.

THE failure of the *Sun*'s campaign to stop the BBC broadcasting images of dead British soldiers as part of its *Correspondent* programme on the war in Iraq was not for want of trying.

The paper devoted more than a dozen articles and leader columns to the issue, dragging Tony Blair and Geoff Hoon on to the bandwagon and encouraging readers to complain directly to the BBC before predicting a mass turn-off by "the *Sun*'s ten million readers".

In the event the programme went out as planned on 2 June with a respectable audience of 1.7 million, and the BBC recorded only around 50 complaints. By contrast, a TV advertisment for a *Sun* promotion broadcast the week before, which showed a man inhaling helium from a balloon, had to be pulled after the ITC received 17 complaints from viewers.

It ruled that the risk of children imitating the "potenially dangerous practice" made the advert "unsuitable for broadcast and required that it should remain off air in its current form."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Breaking news: Another US soldier dies in Iraq. More soon."

— BBC online, 9 June.

ALAN YENTOB has been declared the BBC's new "face of the arts", even if Greg Dyke doesn't trust him with executive responsibility for them (he covers drama, entertainment and children's programming instead).

But not everyone at TV Centre is fully behind his new series, *Imagine*. Noting Botney's personal relationships with several of the programme's subjects, staff have rechristened the series "Al's Pals".

SPLIT personalities

Bob Moore

Bob the Buddha

GOING LIVE

"NOW we're going live to Everest. Jane Hughes is there… What kind of view can you see at the moment Jane?" asked Simon Mayo on BBC Radio Five Live on 29 May.

"Not much, it's pitch black here as it's the middle of the night," replied the plucky hackette.

CHANNEL 4's *Big Brother* may or may not be evidence of the dumbing down of television, but it certainly showcases the dumbness of its contestants.

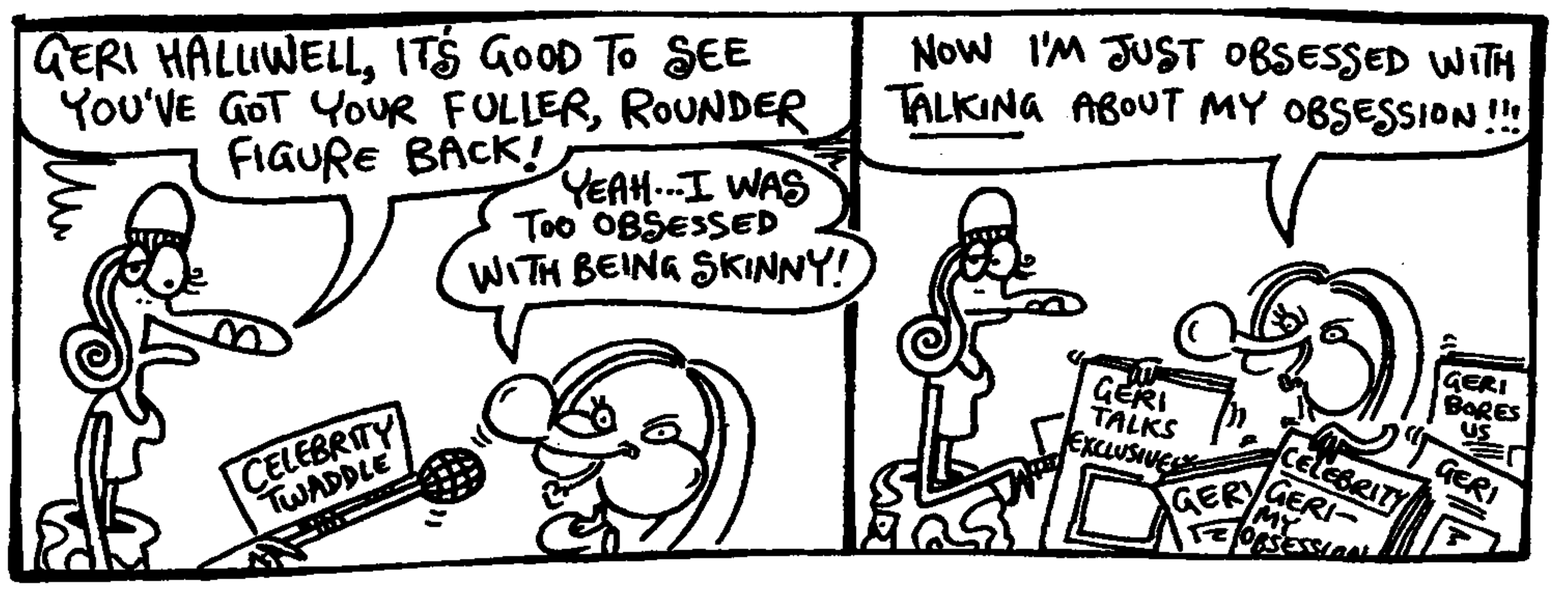
In the show's first week 20-year-old evictee Anouska announced that she had taken a Mensa test and "ended up with an IQ of 95." Luckily her fellow housemate, 27-year-old "visual merchandiser" Steph, was able to reassure her: "That's a good IQ. It's not like you got 10."

ALTHOUGH he actually lives in Manchester, Sir Bob Scott led Liverpool's bid to become European Capital of Culture in 2008 – and was quick to express his "enormous excitement" at last week's victory.

This surprised some alumni of Merton, Oxford, the college that educated both Scott and Sir Jeremy Isaacs, chairman of the judges. For at last year's dinner of the Merton Society, of which he is president, Sir Bob gave an emotional speech revealing that although he was heading the Liverpool bid his heart was really with Oxford. Let us hope no one tells his beloved Scousers.

SUPERMODELS

KERBER


GERI HALLIWELL, IT'S GOOD TO SEE YOU'VE GOT YOUR FULLER, ROUNDER FIGURE BACK!
YEAH…I WAS TOO OBSESSED WITH BEING SKINNY!
CELEBRITY TWADDLE
NOW I'M JUST OBSESSED WITH TALKING ABOUT MY OBSESSION!!!
GERI TALKS EXCLUSIVELY
GERI BARES US
GERI
CELEBRITY
GERI-MY OBSESSION

DOING THE ROUNDS

Bad Feet

ONE consistent feature of the NHS is its pretence of providing a fully comprehensive service while quietly jettisoning low-profile "Cinderella" services. Under the Tories, dentistry and long-term care of the elderly started to fall off the NHS and "new" Labour has done little to reverse the trend. The latest non-sexy specialty not to make it to the NHS ball is podiatry, which changed its name from chiropody in a bid to raise its profile. Alas, it hasn't worked.

Badly maintained feet cause a huge amount of discomfort and damage, especially for those too frail to reach them. Without podiatry, they become frailer and even more immobile and unstable, and a vicious circle "kicks" in.

Demand for podiatry in an ageing population is increasing rapidly, with a current caseload of 2.25 million, and the NHS reached maximum capacity in 1995. Faced with the political embarrassment of offering elderly patients nine-month waits for basic foot care, many health authorities have decided it's best not to offer it at all. Services are now restricted to those "at risk" (largely diabetic), and waiting lists have been quietly culled.

Researcher Mark Russell has discovered that, in the year 2001/2002, more than 550,000 patients were removed from lists, forcing many into the unregulated private sector at £30 a visit. Elderly patients with common foot disorders often require four treatments a year. Many are unable to pay, and a study by Northampton University found that a majority of those denied treatment deteriorate so much that they become "at risk" within a year.

The government's response, as ever, is to deny the service has been rationed and that its "national service frameworks" (NSFs) will insist on proper foot care. Ironically, the new diabetic NSF may actually make things worse. It specifies that all diabetic patients should have access to podiatry services whether they need them or not. So a huge influx of new patients will further swamp the service for annual check-ups with no new money on offer. A 19-year-old diabetic with perfect feet can now get free foot care as and when they like, but a 90-year-old with pathological nails and corns who enjoyed free NHS foot care for 30 years now has to go private.

A pragmatic solution would be to be honest about the need to ration healthcare and introduce modest fees for selected NHS services. Mr Russell has calculated that simple foot care could be provided by the NHS with a maximum charge per visit of £5. This part of the service would then become completely self-funding, and far cheaper than going private.

Alas, "new" Labour would far rather bury the problem that invite a political row over NHS charges.

Oh to live in Avon

LAST year M.D. revealed that he lived in a Bermuda triangle of three no-star trusts (Bristol Royal Infirmary, Weston General and Bath Royal United). His nearest one-star trust, North Bristol, has recently posted debts of nearly £50m. And now his strategic health authority covering Avon, Gloucester and Wiltshire is boasting a tremendous £219m debt, forcing hospitals to make £60m in cuts and borrow a further £60m. I'm not an accountant, but could someone please advise where "new" Labour's new billions are going?

M.D.

off your trolley

REEVE & WAY

I CAN'T BELIEVE WE LOST HER. ALL THAT EFFORT FOR NOTHING. I REALLY THOUGHT WE COULD SAVE HER
DISCONNECT, BAG...
YOU'LL GET OVER IT. COMES WITH THE JOB...
IT'S THE FIRST ONE YOU LOSE THAT HURTS THE MOST
SAVE OUR UNIT
SAVE OUR UNIT

SIGNAL FAILURES

Progress? What progress?

THE bureaucrats and lawyers who run Britain's railways have a golden rule: make every accident investigation last longer than the last one.

The cause of the straightforward derailment on a set of points at Potters Bar in May 2002 has officially still not been determined. The report issued by the health and safety executive (HSE) last month was just the latest "progress report" on its investigation.

When rail safety was managed by British Rail alone, under the independent Railway Inspectorate, progress reports weren't needed because accident causes were rapidly established and sensible changes made to prevent a repeat. "Sensible" is the operative word: as the HSE floundered after Potters Bar, it suggested changing the design of hundreds of points – an expensive way to address what was obviously a maintenance issue.

The Clapham Junction crash in 1988 was far more complex than Potters Bar; yet within 24 hours British Rail knew enough about the causes to admit full liability. But soon after Potters Bar, maintenance contractor Jarvis was trying to persuade the City that saboteurs were to blame – a red herring that complicated the accident investigation. The HSE won't issue the final Potters Bar report until any legal proceedings have finished... and Inspector Knacker is awaiting the final report before starting any legal proceedings.

The latest progress report highlights again the problem of fragmentation, which divides responsibility for safety between assorted bodies. So no "progress" there since the same problem was highlighted by the 1997 Southall crash, Paddington in 1999 and Hatfield in 2000.

Fragmentation means lawyers, by the trainload. After the Paddington crash Railtrack issued a writ against Thames Trains and Thames issued a writ against Railtrack. Now Thames is suing the HSE, claiming the HSE delayed approval of new signals at Paddington until the Southall crash driver had been prosecuted (as reported in *Eye* 1031). The HSE has tried twice to get the case struck out but last month the appeal court decided only a trial could establish if the HSE had a duty of care.

How can a body that's there to observe and advise itself be heading for the dock? The HSE's rail division stopped being a referee several years ago, when the privatised industry failed to tighten crucial safety rules and practices and the HSE began issuing instructions rather than guidance. The referee loses his independence if he kicks the ball, but HSE inspectors must have felt they had little choice when Railtrack plc was officially meant to enforce all the safety rules but was too busy covering its own backside and developing property.

Many a company director will enjoy seeing the boot on the other foot if the HSE stands trial. But for UK transport and travellers it will be yet another counter-productive consequence of the Tories' tragic rail privatisation. Even if the HSE weren't found liable, it would try to ensure it never suffered such humiliation again. Cue more bureaucracy whenever equipment is added to the railway, or simply altered or moved, as the HSE covers every arse (*shurely "base"? Ed*). Then each job would cost more and take longer. In other words, the railway would be even more strapped for cash, routes closed even longer for maintenance and more travellers forced on to roads where the risks are far greater.

RICHARD Bowker, chairman of the strategic rail authority, complained to the *Times* last week about "shoddy" references to his family in the *Eye*.

Times readers may have pictured Bowker's poor relatives being stitched up by heartless *Eye* hacks, but the only member of his family to have featured in these pages has been his father, Roger.

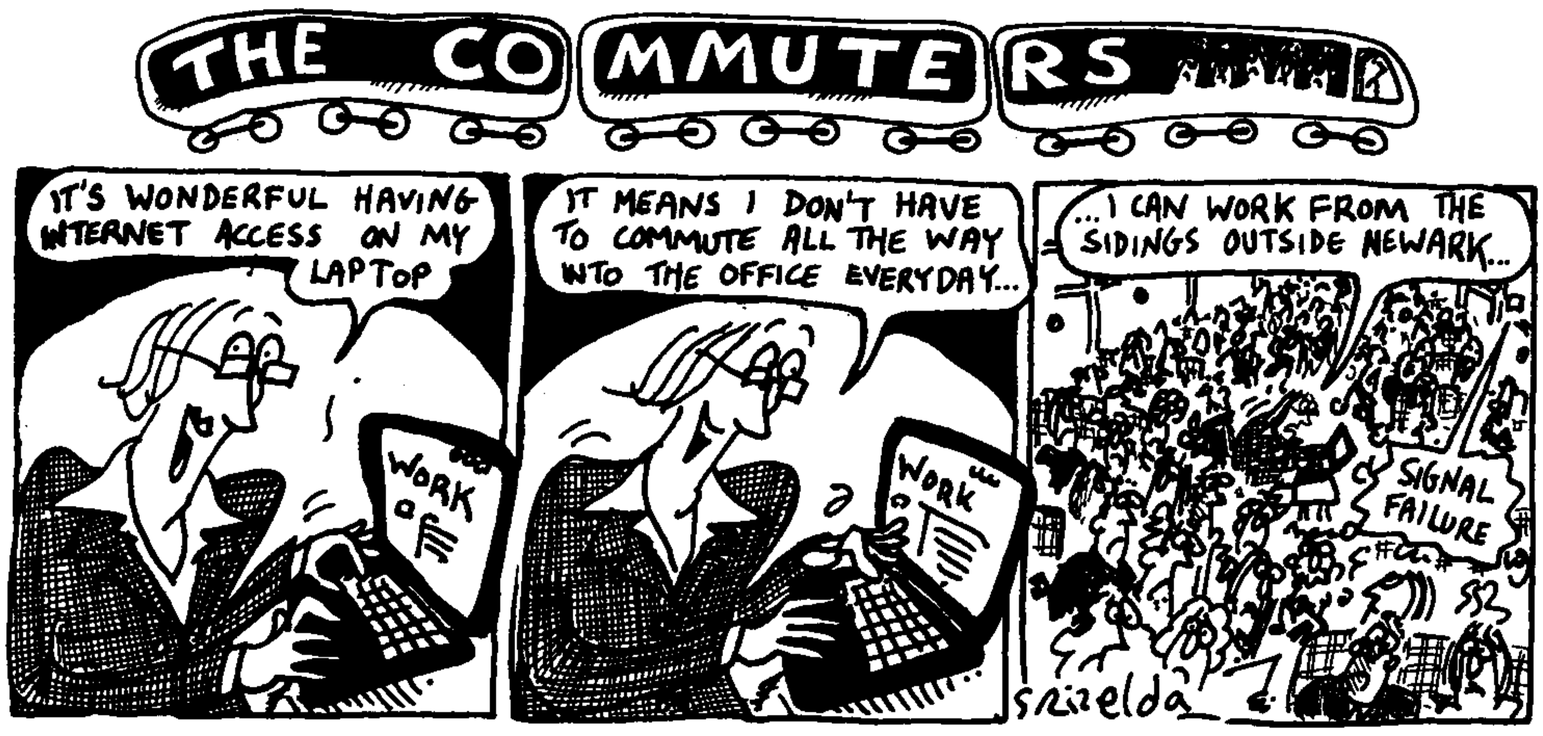
He of course is an executive of bus company Stagecoach, which has a 49 percent share in Virgin Trains and is, one would have thought, a legitimate focus of journalistic inquiry.

But family ties are obviously playing on Bowker's mind. Julia Clarke, the SRA's freight director, was dismissed in January after a row with Bowker over comments made by her husband (Lord Tony Berkeley, head of the Rail Freight Group and a critic of Bowker's approach to rail freight) in *Rail Professional* magazine. The matter will go to a tribunal in due course.

● INTERESTING FACT: The estimated cost of a 3-mile rail tunnel under Leipzig, Germany, to link two sections of network is £400m

The estimated cost of a 5-mile Crossrail tunnel under London to link two sections of network is £15,000m.

'Dr B. Ching'


THE COMMUTERS
IT'S WONDERFUL HAVING INTERNET ACCESS ON MY LAPTOP
WORK
IT MEANS I DON'T HAVE TO COMMUTE ALL THE WAY INTO THE OFFICE EVERYDAY...
WORK
...I CAN WORK FROM THE SIDINGS OUTSIDE NEWARK...
SIGNAL FAILURE
Grizelda

ROTTEN BOROUGHS

KNACKER ON THE JOB

PERSECUTED publican Geoff Monks (*Eyes passim*) left prison last week for a welcome home party at the Snooty Fox, at Lowick, Northants, where he and friends celebrated with Liebfraumilch and ham sandwiches.

The wine commemorated the bottle of plonk which began Monks's nightmare when it was served by mistake to local solicitor Jenny Lawrence at the pub in May 1998. After drinking it all, Lawrence was barred for loudly berating the young waitress who had served it.

Lawrence then claimed to have picked up food poisoning at the pub. This led to a raid by East Northants council environmental health officers and Monks's highly dubious prosecution in which the EHOs claimed to have found mouldy ham — although they produced no scientific evidence — the imposition of record fines and Monks's subsequent imprisonment because he could not pay. Lawrence, meanwhile, had boasted of her close friendships with senior figures at the council and with local magistrates.

Monks was bucked on his release to learn that Northamptonshire's acting chief constable Frank Whiteley has ordered an investigation by a member of the force's major crime team into events surrounding Monks's prosecution. The investigation, revealed in a letter to Monks's MP Phil Hope, will take into account "other developments" which have come to Inspector Knacker's notice. Watch this space.

CHERIE ON TOP

IN 1998 Tony Blair made a fool of himself on Doncaster railway station when he was photographed endorsing Donny's "new regime" of Malcolm Glover and Mike Farrington shortly before they were arrested and pleaded guilty to expenses fiddling (*Eye* 1050). Both received suspended jail sentences.

Now Cherie Blair's grinning face has appeared in the local *Free Press* beside elected mayor Martin Winter (*Eyes passim ad nauseam*). She chirrups: "I have been listening to local party members and their plans for improving Doncaster are really exciting."

What did she have in mind? Perhaps it was race relations in the wake of Professor Gus John's report (*Eye* 1079) which condemned the council and local Labour party as "institutionally racist". Or was it a reference to performance, where the council is delivering failing services in housing, education and social services?

As she spoke, Labour's "policy" on fat cat pay increases was being blasted apart by Donny council with leaked plans to give six top council officers a 36 percent pay increase, with a further 22 heads of service grabbing a £10,000 boost, costing council tax payers an extra £2.4m. At the same time 114 frontline housing services jobs are to go and residents are celebrating a 13.5 percent hike in council tax. She knows how to pick a winner, does Mrs B!

TEMPLES OF DOOM

MORE on the *Eye*'s revelation last year (1068) of the cosy relationship between the consultant advising Monmouthshire county council on the possible sale of its 3,900 council homes and the chief executive of the "independent" consultants advising the tenants (they're married).

The council announced that Malcolm Temple, a director of consultants Beha Williams Norman (BWN), would no longer be working on the contract, while his wife Wendy's Heart of England (HoE) consultancy would not be acting for the tenants. That role is now played by the "impartial and independent" Monmouth Independent Tenants advisers (MITA).

Curiously, however, MITA's newsletter for tenants is to be found on the Heart of England website. The *Eye* rang the helpline number for tenants and asked what relationship, if any, MITA had with Heart of England. "We are one and the same," said the adviser. "The name was changed because it wasn't thought appropriate to the area." Indeed!

In February *Eye* 1073 reported how the Temples had not only worked their double act at Monmouthshire. They kept quiet about their relationship when Exeter city council was considering a stock transfer in 2001 and called in BWN and HoE. In that case, however, tenants voted against a transfer. A comparison of the client lists of BWN and HoE reveals a long list of common council clients: Blackburn with Darwen, Maidstone, Newcastle under Lyme, North Dorset, Salisbury, Scarborough, South Bedfordshire, Test Valley, Torbay, Vale of White Horse, Walsall, West Oxfordshire and West Wiltshire. Of the authorities on this list, the housing stock today only remains in council hands at South Beds and Salisbury.

● GUILDFORD Conservatives have launched a smart recycling initiative. A leaflet to residents proclaimed that the rival Lib Dems are "rubbish at recycling" and to prove the Tories' green credentials, the flyer was accompanied by a blue plastic bag into which residents were invited to place plastic bottles, bags and packaging before putting it out on the street beside their normal rubbish collection. The only catch, as careful readers may have noticed, is that "the plastics won't actually be recycled". Splendid!

LOST IN SPACE

LAMBETH's chief executive Faith Boardman is trying every trick in the book to try to stop key witness Alex Owolade giving evidence to a public inquiry into racism in the council's housing department.

Owolade was sacked on trumped-up charges after he tried to blow the whistle, in his capacity as a Unison shop steward, on behalf of seven staff who complained they were racially harassed by housing managers. Boardman told the inquiry that she recalled receiving a letter of complaint from the seven and that she had handed the matter over to, er, housing managers to investigate. When she heard nothing she assumed everything was fine. In fact the complaint was never investigated and the seven were told they were being made redundant.

Although four succumbed to the pressure to quit, three did not and were represented by their shop steward, Alex Owolade, who was then sacked himself (*Eye* 1074).

Tactfully Boardman went on to tell the inquiry in Brixton that people who made racist comments should sometimes be allowed to claim a "safe space". Call a colleague a "nigger", for example, and then deftly sidestep into the "safe space" — a novel concept even by the standards of local government bollockspeak.

Owolade cannot give evidence to the inquiry until his own lengthy employment tribunal (ET) case against Lambeth for unfair dismissal resumes in Croydon at the end of June. By an amazing coincidence, Boardman has ruled that the public inquiry must end by 30 June because it was costing too much (£175,000 so far).

The chairman, Professor Chris Mullard, asked for more time so Owolade's evidence could be heard, and even volunteered to work for nothing to keep costs down. This cut no ice with Boardman, who seemed determined that the most important witness would not be heard, and that the money spent on the inquiry would be wasted. But as soon as news leaked of the attempt to gag Owolade, Lambeth town hall was bombarded with hundreds of emails and letters demanding the inquiry be extended. On 2 June town hall bosses gave in and agreed that the inquiry could go on until the end of July, so Owolade will have his say after all.

● THE government's Improvement and Development Agency (Idea) has published a splendid "glossary of performance terms" to enable councillors and officers to talk codswallop more fluently. From balanced scorecards to key performance indicators, and benchmarking to continuous service improvements, all the vocabulary required to bamboozle the public and workforce is here. Among many gems, we rather liked "output". What is an "output"? An output is "the goods and services produced by the organisation". Such as? Er, "how many bins a council empties".

EDUCASHUN NEWS

MICROSOFT's annual renewable licences continue to drain cash from the UK's education system, where the company enjoys a virtual monopoly (*Eye* 1062).

In Germany, however, the Munich city authorities offer an interesting example. By this time next year there won't be a sniff of Microsoft on any of the 14,000 computers used in city administration, which is to be switched to the open source Linux system with no annual fees to pay.

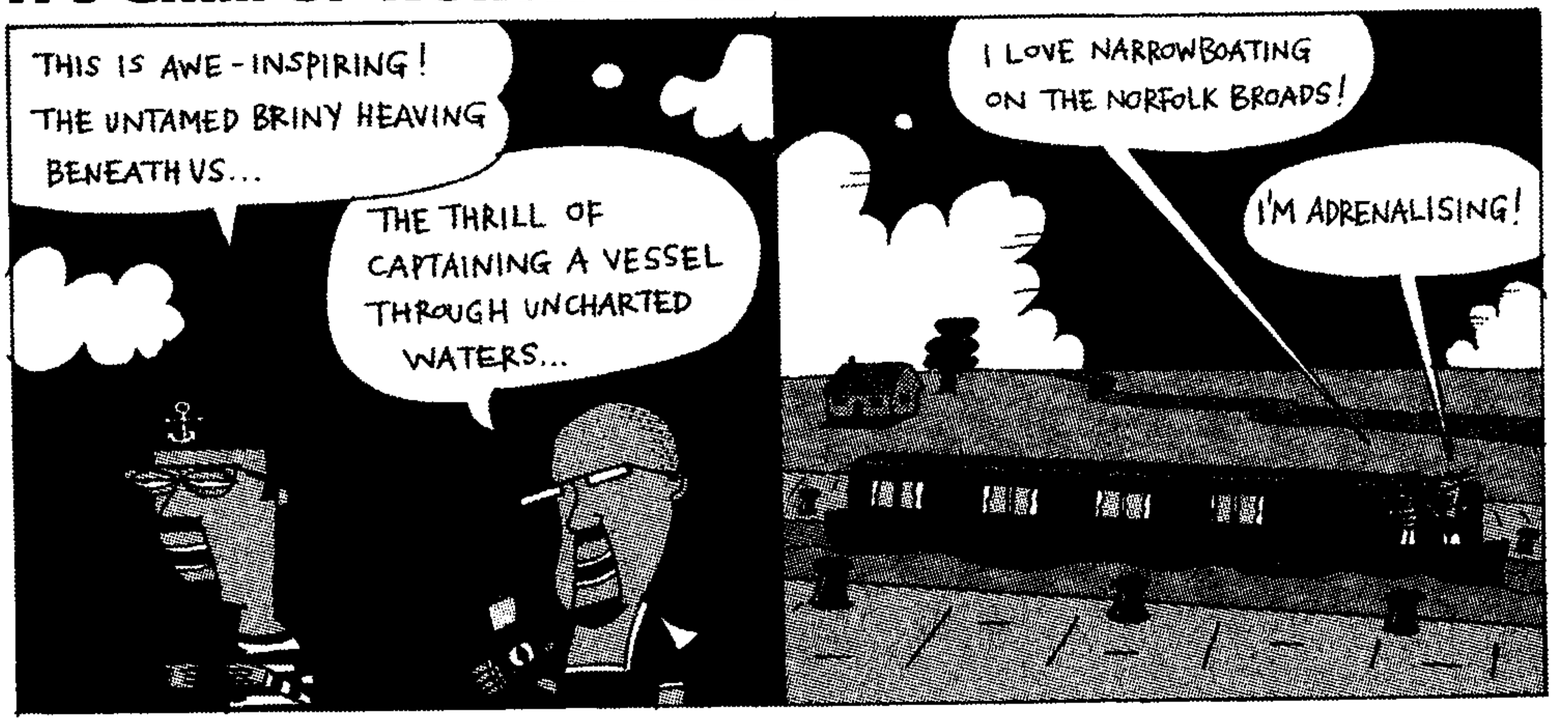
The very idea put Microsoft in such a flap that CEO Steve Ballmer paid a personal visit to Munich's mayor Christian Ude in March. But the city stood firm. A number of other German cities and public agencies are believed to be watching Munich carefully and considering a switch themselves.

Meanwhile in Birmingham the education authority has cautiously put a toe in the water of open source software, using Star Office on the computers in its new Laptops for Teachers scheme. Star Office, a word-processor, spreadsheet and presentations package, is not strictly 100 percent "open source" (the definition is complex but ensures that the source code for any open source software can be redistributed with no fees payable, can be incorporated into other software and must be easily available – usually by downloading from the internet).

It is given to all educational establishments for free by Sun Microsystems and has no annual licensing fee. The cash saved already – and the scheme only just started – has paid for more than 100 extra laptops on the scheme.

IT'S GRIM UP NORTH LONDON

KNIFE & PACKER


THIS IS AWE-INSPIRING! THE UNTAMED BRINY HEAVING BENEATH US...
THE THRILL OF CAPTAINING A VESSEL THROUGH UNCHARTED WATERS...
I LOVE NARROWBOATING ON THE NORFOLK BROADS!
I'M ADRENALISING!

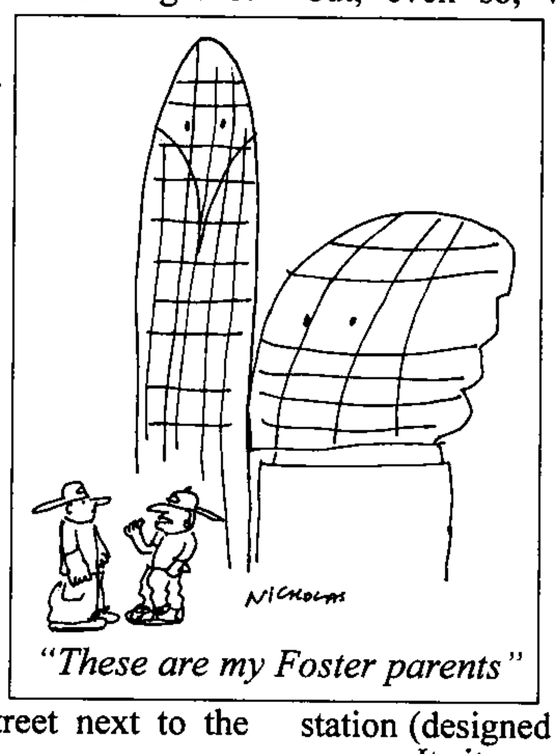
NOOKS and CORNERS

IN BRITAIN, as we all know, nothing succeeds like failure. Take our old friend Anthony Blee, the well-known freemason and architect who is Sir Hugh Casson's successor as a professional rubbisher of historic buildings [*Eyes passim ad magnam nauseam*].

His record as an "expert witness" at public inquiries is pretty dismal. He failed to get St Ethelburga's Bishopsgate replaced rather than restored; his proposal — by the dim firm of Blee Ettwein Bridges — to replace the Free Trade Hall in Manchester was dismissed at the public inquiry; while Teresa Gorman, ex-MP, actually sacked him when he couldn't defend her illegal mutilation of Old Hall Farmhouse at Thurrock.

Yet developers continue to hire Blee.

His latest commission, from the developer London Town, is to defend at a public inquiry a monstrous design for the so-called Tate Tower at Bankside. This is a tall block of flats, mostly luxury, at 44 Hopton Street next to the former Bankside power station.



"These are my Foster parents"

Designed by Philip Gumuchdjian, who once worked for the Richard Rogers firm, it would rise 20 storeys, or 63m, to a pretentious, ragged hanging-gardens summit high above the existing flats by the Thames and, more importantly, well above Sir Giles Scott's sublime brick walls enclosing what is now Tate Modern. It is a building which, even if not an ugly, silly thing, would be far too big for the site.

Needless to say CABE — the Commission for the Built Environment — considers Gumuchdjian's design "holds out the prospect of a beautiful building"; but it was turned down by Southwark's planning committee and is opposed by local residents and BROAD — Bankside Residents for Appropriate Development.

This gratuitous tower's most ferocious and articulate enemy, however, is the director of the Tate, Sir Nicholas Serota, who points out that the 20-storey block would overshadow the principal, west entrance to Tate Modern, casting that much-used space into shadow for much of a summer afternoon. Such a building, so close to Tate Modern's main entrance, will, Serota argues, "inevitably diminish the quality and value of the space for millions of visitors;" it would be, he says, like "building a tower block in the forecourt of the British Museum".

That suave professional "expert witness" Anthony Blee disagrees, and has been so bold as to compare the proposed block of flats with the campanile of St Mark's in Venice (a structure of brick, as I recall, which is not enhanced by plate-glass windows). He also asserts that Gumuchdjian's masterpiece will be a "beacon", guiding otherwise disorientated visitors to the Tate.

Such subtle arguments are obviously worth their weight in gold; but perhaps Mr Blee has not noticed that Tate Modern already has its own beacon, its own landmark, indeed its very own and much more elegant campanile in Scott's central chimney-tower. (This, incidentally, rises to 99m but, even so, would have been exceeded by London Town's first, even more arrogant proposal for 44 Hopton Street.)

Even without the involvement of Blee, though, a public inquiry like this ought not to be taking place at all: not because, as many like Ken Livingstone seem to think, London cannot have too many towers and so a scheme like this, which conforms to basic planning guidelines, ought to go through on the nod; but because such a proposal should not be countenanced full stop.

Tate Modern is a public building, a civic building, converted from a generating station (designed by a great architect) with public money. It sits on a magnificent site by the edge of the Thames, opposite St Paul's Cathedral and the City of London, to which it is connected by a new, albeit silly and once-wobbly Millennium Bridge, also paid for with public money.

Mindful of its civic responsibilities, the Tate has been concerned to enhance the surroundings of Tate Modern and has commissioned Gehl Architects of Copenhagen to produce a public-space plan for the area. So why should a private developer be allowed to spoil everything, and undermine the visible civic status of a major public investment, by buying a site opposite the western forecourt and dump a 20-storey block of flats on it?

'Piloti'

Warballs

"Trinity students have been shocked by a massive rent hike proposed by the college... In a letter to undergraduates the head of the college, the Hon. Michael Beloff QC, cites 'the war in Iraq, concerns about terrorism and now Sars' as contributory reasons for the increases." — *Cherwell*.

"In her Manhattan lab, [Cindy] Sherman is putting the final touches to an exciting new series, the first to use digital technology. They are large portraits of clowns, all played by Sherman herself... Sherman says she embarked on the clown idea after 11 September, an event that heralded the end of irony for her." — *Observer*.

YOUNG BRITISH ARTISTS BY BIRCH

I-SPY

Spain

France

Submitted by Geoff Smith and P. Grabsky. £10 paid for similar submissions. *(SAE required for return of photographs.)*

DOWN ON THE FARM

ONE of Britain's most active GM campaigners recently received by mistake an invitation to a GM "consultation" meeting in Brussels. Delighted to have the chance to put her case directly to the EU's agriculture commissioner, Frans Fischler, she was intrigued to see the great man take the platform, flanked by representatives of companies concerned with pushing GM crops.

Fischler announced that growing GM crops would soon be legal throughout the EU. There was no opportunity for questioning or debate. "It was a 'consultation'", as she put it, "only in the sense that Stalin was 'consulting' with the Soviet people when he announced one of his five-year plans".

A useful by-product of the debate over whether it should be legal to plant GM crops in Britain is that it has helped bring home to a few more folk the realisation that Britain no longer has any power to decide such things. GM campaigners can lobby environment secretary Mrs Beckett and her fellow ministers all they like over whether the English countryside should be covered in genetically-modified wheat and carrots, but it is a waste of breath.

As minister Michael Meacher recently admitted, the "competence" to decide GM policy was handed to Brussels more than 10 years ago and there is no longer anything he and his colleagues can do about it. But the same is true of all other aspects of farm policy. It seems strangely difficult for people to take on board that Britain's right to decide agricultural policy has been handed over lock, stock and barrel to Brussels: from deciding which crops should be grown in our fields to making it a criminal offence to bury a stillborn lamb or put a basket of free range eggs on the counter of a village shop.

That is why people like Mrs Beckett and Lord Whitty, the farms minister, are reduced to behaving these days like bullying traffic wardens: they have no more power to decide what goes on in British farming than a jobsworth from the local social services office. That is also why British farmers must take an interest in such things as the "mid-term review" of the EU's common agricultural policy, recently discussed in the European parliament by such experts as Agnes Schierhuber, an Austrian MEP, who explained to her less well-informed colleagues that "farming is related to rural areas".

The debate's subject was a report which began by recommending that what is needed to reform the CAP is "the preservation of a multifunctional European agricultural model through a new system of support based on partial decoupling of aid with the addition of specific multifunctional supplements". This was a model of lucidity compared with the remaining 13 pages. But their gist was that subsidies should be taken away from larger farms and redistributed as funding for "rural development".

What this means for Britain, where the average farm is seven times larger than in the rest of the EU, is that subsidies will be withdrawn from farmers and given instead to the burgeoning array of quangoes and consultants who in Britain are virtually the only beneficiaries of the rural development fund. In other words, it will be made even harder for British farmers to compete with their more highly-subsidised French and Irish colleagues, who still can't believe their luck that, when the British hand over £2.5bn every year to subsidise their own farmers, they must also hand over another £2.5bn to subsidise their competitors elsewhere in the EU. A very clever arrangement.

'Muckspreader'

Letters

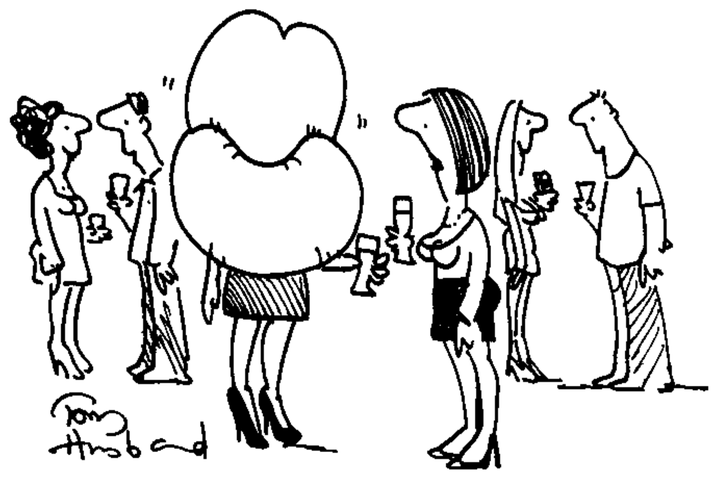
Worthing cause

Sir,

Can I join in the general approbation and congratulations concerning your investigation into Mapeley? All copies of your report quickly sold out in local newsagents here in Worthing. Your report's been avidly read by all members of staff (including senior managers), some with astonishment, some with glee and others (perhaps the most) with a resigned "Why do we bother?"

*Please would all Eye readers take up your correspondent's excellent suggestion about putting copies of your report with self-assessment returns. Nick Montagu recently stated on the intranet he wanted to be remembered for his contribution to diversity. When the truth dawns in **all** Revenue offices about his activities over the last two years, he will be remembered as betraying what we all once regarded as a valuable public service.*

WORTHING TAXMAN.



"Have you had that lip treatment?"

Explosive views

Sir,

There seems to be a popular misconception, in the media, that a significant percentage of cluster bomb sub-munitions fail to explode on dispersal because of manufacturing defects. In fact, many "duds" are mines: designed to maim or kill military personnel attempting to rescue their initial casualties and repair damage. It's too bad if they continue to cripple the local population long after the war.

Regards,
OLD ARMS DEALER,

Name and address withheld.

Desert song

Sir,

Just to let you know that Rev Blair's visit went without a hitch and was well received by the masses of squaddies in Basra. After his stirring speech about how proud he was of the British forces, and how what we had done had changed the course of history in the Middle East (for the better!), he took a photo call during which one plucky squaddie piped up "Mr Blair, how about a pay rise?", which received a grin as our illustrious leader swivelled quickly to shake hands with another enthusiastic supporter...

Regards,
SANDY SUBALTERN,

Via email.

Leadership decided by secret ballet

East Lindsey Target

Veiled comment

Sir,

It's never easy for a hack to admit he's been had, but the Mirror's award-winning team of Anton Antonowicz and Phil Spencer surely have been.

We invite Eye readers to examine look(un)alike exhibits A and B. On the left, the Mirror sleuths' "exclusive" picture of "Zarmina", the woman publicly executed by the Taliban in Kabul. On the right, our picture of the real Zarmina, still attached to her official confession form, clearly stamped and initialled by the Taliban judge. Neither the confession form nor the three court rulings were found by the Mirror hacks or their "fixer", but they were located by our Japanese colleagues Taku and Eiko, who spent several months searching in Kabul. One of the judges who identified the file for them was Mr Molvi Zada of the supreme court, and Judge Zaklowa, who personally signed one of the court rulings in the case.

All the Mirrormen found was the pictureless death warrant, which was easy to get hold of, and which – if they'd bothered to watch – they'd have seen in our programme.

Through our Japanese colleagues we showed both pictures to Zarmina's children, Hiwad, age 14, and Bibi, age 11. Of the Mirror photo they said, "This is not our mother". They confirmed that our picture was the real Zarmina. Zarmina's brother-in-law, Marzak, his wife and elder son also confirmed this, as did a further brother-in-law, Habib, and his wife. Zarmina's neighbour's mother, who was a close friend, said that the Mirror's photo was quite different from Zarmina's face. She was shown our picture and said, "This is Zarmina". We should point out that no cash was offered to anyone.

As to why we waited so long to blow the whistle: we didn't. We alerted Anton last October, when our programme Lifting the Veil *was being completed. We also note that neither the original article or photo is currently available on the Mirror website.*

So the last great mystery in the Zarmina story is who on earth the woman in the Mirror "scoop" actually is.

Yours sincerely,
CARLA GARAPEDIAN &
DAVID HENSHAW,

Hardcash Productions Ltd.

Exhibit A

Exhibit B

Social climber?

Sir,

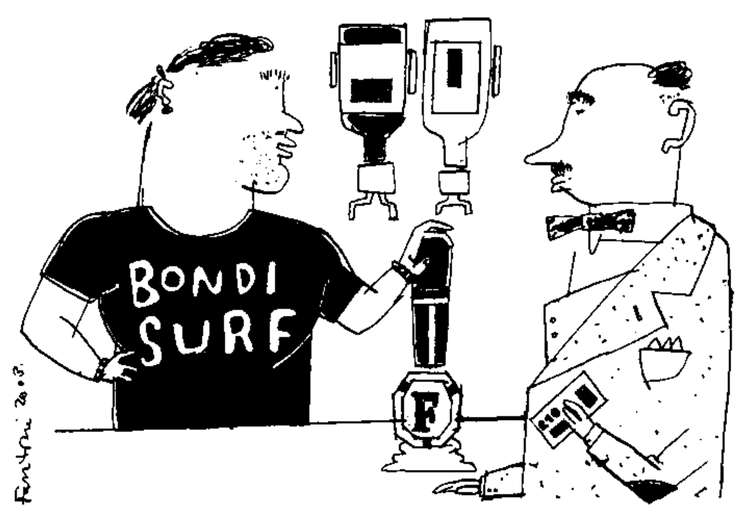
So, the "three" people who climbed Everest in May 1953 (Number Crunching, 1081) were Tenzing Norgay, Edmund Hillary and – oh yeah, how could I forget – Jeffrey Archer.

With regards from Base Camp,
RICHARD DUNSTAN,

Via email.

● While Edmund Hillary and Tenzing Norgay were the only two climbers to reach the top of Everest on 29 May 1953, their expedition leader Colonel John Hunt climbed with them all the way to Camp VI, at around 27,000 feet. Many of the 300 people who were climbing the mountain during May 2003 did not make it all the way to the top either.

Scenes You Seldom See



"No worries, mate. I'm a professional barman and know exactly what you've ordered"

Lookalike

Blair

Blair

Sir,

Stealing material from other publications and inventing quotes... Are the former New York Times reporter Jason Blair and British premier related? I think we should be given 45 minutes' warning.

CHRISTOPHER STEPHENSON,

Via email.

Cock and Bull

Sir,

I write to protest about an article on page 4 of Private Eye 1079.

The article alleges that in order to resign as deputy editor of the Sunday Express, I "required some inducement to go". It is said that accordingly, I was given a £50,000 pay-off. Both allegations are untrue.

I resigned from the Sunday Express of my own accord two days after my arrest and neither sought nor received any pay-off. I left the terms of my departure entirely up to Express Newspapers. It was the decision of the managing editor, Alex Bannister, to honour the terms of my contract and continue to pay my salary for three months. The truth is that I felt it was inappropriate to remain in my post while I was under investigation for such matters. I am unable to comment on the matters under investigation.

Yours sincerely,
ANDREW BULL,

London.

As any fuel kno

Sir,

Chris Williams (Letters, 1081) correctly states that no energy storage device can be 100% efficient – but in the case of bio-diesel, we would like to think that the major energy input would be free, eco-friendly sunlight. If this is not so, and the energy available from bio-fuel is less than the input after disallowing sunlight – in other words, if it costs more in fuel to sow, harvest and process, say, rape, than we get back as bio-fuel – then we are indeed running up the down escalator on this one.

Grasping the fundamentals of an argument is within the reach even of the amateurs.

Yours, blowing hot air,
DOUGLAS PORTER,

Norwich.

Talking crop

Sir,

Muckspreader's piece on oilseed rape shows fine journalistic disingenuity. As he would know, but most of his readers would not, the payment per hectare of rape is the same as that for wheat, barley and other cereals – crops which, like almost all agricultural production in Europe, are as marginal as OSR.

Quite what he means when he says "it takes more energy to make the fuel than the fuel itself generates" is unclear. It requires around 15 percent energy input to produce biodiesel – almost exactly the same as for petrodiesel extraction and refining – with these environmental benefits:

Biodiesel contains no sulphur or carcinogenic aromatic hydrocarbons, and it produces a lot less unburned hydrocarbons, carbon monoxide and particulate matter. A US department of energy study showed that the production and use of biodiesel, compared with petroleum diesel, resulted in a 78.5 percent reduction in carbon dioxide emissions. This makes the attitude of the UK government odd – as biodiesel contains about 7 percent less energy than petrodiesel, the application of the full fuel duty rate means biodiesel in the UK is the highest taxed road fuel in the world.

JAMES COPE,

Blairgowrie, Perthshire.

Maxine respect

Sir,

Re: page 4, Eye 1081. I think Maxine de Brunner is/was a Detective Chief Inspector as opposed to a Deceptive Inspector [sic] *before her recent, no doubt well merited, promotion to Detective Superintendent.*

Could there really be "hundreds of vacancies for the top job of Superintendent etc"? I would not have thought there are hundreds of posts for the rank of superintendent in the Metropolitan police.

Regards,
RICHARD LHOYD-OWEN,

Via email.

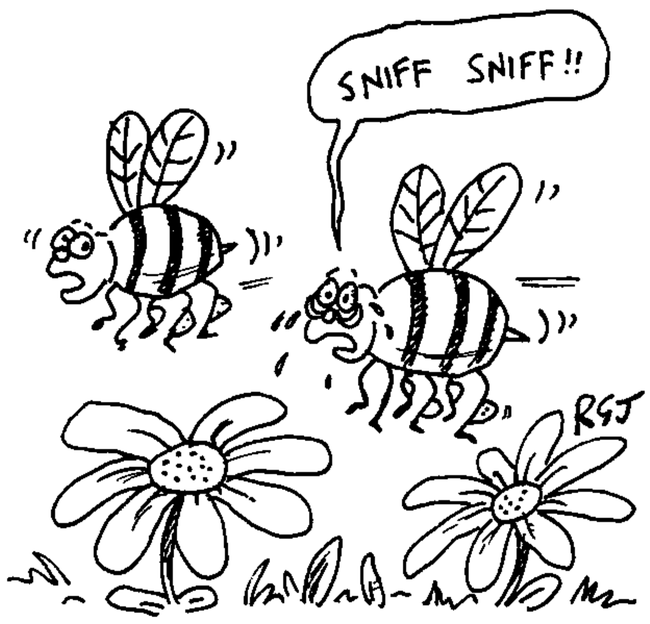
LUVVIES

"When I let up from the weed and the drinking too, I cried every day. And I liked that. I like crying. And now I not only wanna cry and show my crying to other people, I wanna just split myself down the middle and open my guts and just throw everything out!"

WOODY HARRELSON
The Guardian

Submitted by David French.

An occasional column devoted to gems from the acting profession. £10 paid for entries.



"Allergic to pollen? Bad luck!"

Colemanballs

£10 paid for contributions

"The terrorist attacks threaten to derail the road-map before it's got off the ground."
Newsreader
(Adam Abdelnoor)

"Time stood still for a couple of seconds then."
Sky Sports
(Matthew Hopkins)

"He looks a bit like Jacques Cousteau, and he certainly does know the secrets of the deep when it comes to tyre technology."
JAMES ALLEN, ITV
(Tim Hanrahan)

"He is the man who has been brought on to replace Pavel Nedved. The irreplaceable Pavel Nedved."
CLIVE TYLDESLEY
(Tim Eldridge)

Presenter: *So describe your body position when a ball is released.*
Mike Atherton: *Knees slightly bent, with my head directly between my feet.*
Channel 4
(Keir Shiels)

THE EARLY YEARS:
MARQUESS OF BATH
CASTLE, CASTLE THEME PARK, CASTLE SHOPPING MALL, CASTLE EXPERIENCE DOME...
GRAND SAND CASTLE COMPETITION
Geoff Monkton.

Euro moan

Sir,

It was appropriate that the cover of your issue containing a free "Eye" poster should show Giscard welcoming Blair to Downing Street ("Eye" 1081).

An unfortunate consequence of the enclosed poster was that the magazine fell apart... rather like Europe, in fact.

Yours faithfully,
DR. ALEX MAY,

Holloway, London.

Lookalike

John

John

Sir,

Has anyone noticed the remarkable similarity between Sir Elton John, the very openly gay rock musician and Dr Jeffrey John, one of the Church of England's leading homosexual rights advocates?

Are they in any way related?

RICHARD LEESON,

Via email.

Spart alec

Sir,

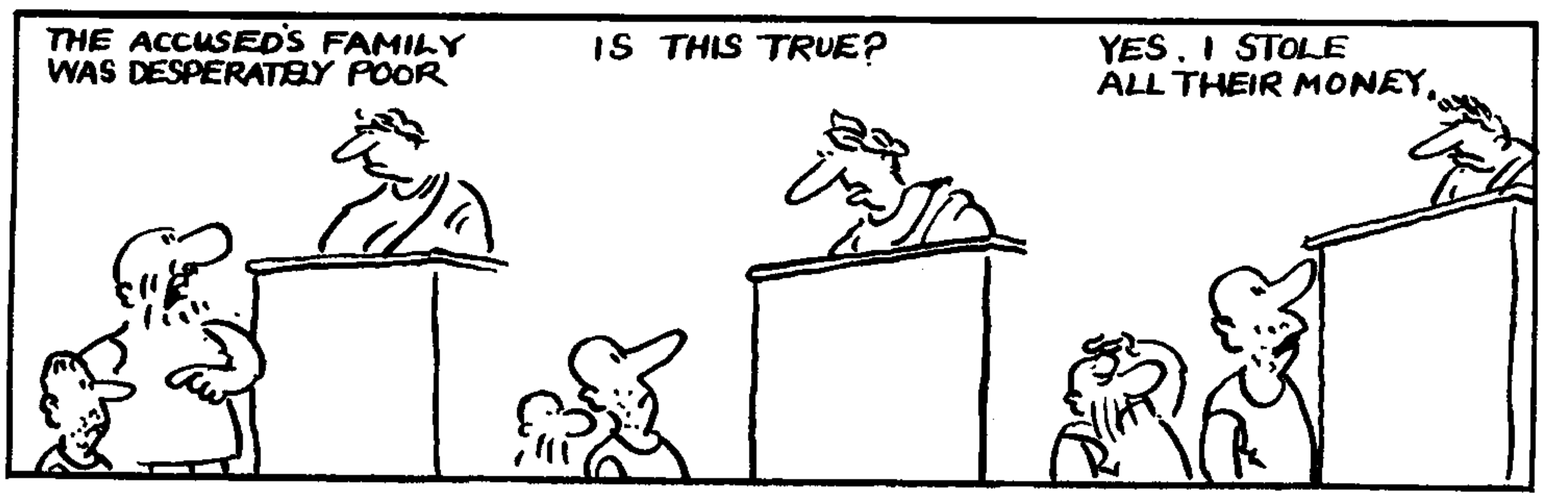
*Lovely to get the "freebie" poster with the last issue (1081). I'm trying to find a place on my wall. One comment though. Rushton's cartoon of the anarchist rally is funny but reinforces one of the biggest political misconceptions. **Anarchism is not about disorder!** Yes, some anarchists over the centuries have tried to upset the status quo through violent direct action. But anarchism is really about people taking responsibility for their own society and organising it themselves. This is the very opposite of the chaos of the present world where so many people don't have even their basic material needs met, thanks to the collusion of governments with*

Yours,
ROS KANE.

● Sadly, this letter had to be cut for reasons of space. Ed.

HOM SAP

AUSTIN



Letter from **Managua**
from Our Own Correspondent

AH, the bitter taste of liberation by Uncle Sam. We Nicaraguans know it well. We can, as former Commandante and leader of the nation Daniel Ortega would say, show solidarity with our oppressed Iraqi brethren.

It's 13 years since an undeclared war by the US forced Ortega and his fellow lefties from the Sandinista National Liberation Front to submit to regime change through the ballot box. What do we have to show for this liberation?

Landmines laid by the US-backed Contras still kill and maim; and we're the poorest people in the western hemisphere (apart from the Haitians). We no longer have rationing (now the US is not blockading us and mining our ports), but we do have rising water, electricity and phone charges thanks to privatisation, so there's little money for food anyhow. The economy is run from Washington by the multilateral lenders who have us hooked into a debt relief programme.

In fact there's only one thing going for us: a huge inflow of aid. The Sandinistas' romantic image ensures that you softies in northern Europe keep pumping money into worthy projects. We get $500 each a year, equivalent to a year's output. Except we don't get it – the government does. And until last year that meant President Arnoldo Aleman, or "Gordoman" (Fatman), as he is known.

Gordoman breaks the scales at 30 stone. He's so big the authorities at Managua jail have had to build a special cell to hold him, now that his plundering has caught up with him. He's not actually taken up residence yet, numerous health scares confining him to his palatial ranch outside the capital.

Aleman's fall has been as impressive as his bulk. His former vice-president, octogenarian farmer Enrique Bolaños, moved swiftly against him when he took over the top job in 2001. He blew the gaff on the pilfering the press had reported to little effect during Aleman's rule.

The president ran up $1.7m on an American Express card held by the central bank. This included shopping sprees on his foreign trips. He took the entire cabinet and hangers-on to Miami for his wedding at public expense. He channeled up to $100m from state institutions to private bank accounts in Panama. A well-sourced story tells how he headed off a cabinet revolt. Ministers were enjoying the hot tub at his ranch when he defecated in it. "First one out loses his job," Gordoman snorted.

His chief collaborator was his tax chief, Byron Jerez, who spent the civil war years making a packet in Miami. Jerez was the bagman but his number was up when the US, once Bolaños had seen off the Sandinistas at the polls, decided to get tough. It suspended his visa on the grounds of suspected money laundering. With US pressure, things quickly unravelled until Gordoman himself was charged.

Why can't the White House leave us alone? We believe it is still the punishment we must pay for the Sandinistas' violation of the sacred right to private property, foundation of the American dream. They even had the cheek to confiscate businesses from the US entrepreneurs who ran with the brutal Somoza family, which owned around a quarter of the country and economy before being overthrown by Ortega's guerrillas.

Having now set an example from among its rightwing allies, Washington is ready finally to settle scores with its pesky leftwing enemies. But perhaps the quickest way to raise money and restore the rule of law here would be for the US to abide by a 1986 judgment of the International Court of Justice that it should pay reparations for waging an illegal paramilitary war on us.

FUNNY OLD WORLD

COMPILED BY **VICTOR LEWIS-SMITH**

● "I don't think that individuals who dump their aged parents outside our doors are immoral, or unjust, or not decent human beings," Dr David Estwick told reporters at St. Michael District Hospital in Barbados.

"This may be an unusual way to look at the problem, but it's not as callous as it may appear. In fact, it might be in the best interests of all concerned."

Dr Estwick, the hospital registrar, was speaking about the increasing numbers of confused elderly people who are being dumped anonymously outside the island's hospitals by relatives. "Do not judge the people who do this as unkind or even vile. They usually only do it because they are under pressure, because they need more space at home, or because they have grown tired of looking after their incontinent and forgetful parents. So they cut the name tags out of their parent's clothing, bring them to the hospital, and leave them on one of the corridors or benches in the compound. They know that there are medical and nursing personnel here, so when they abandon their mother or father, they can be sure that their parent will be well taken care of. To me, this phenomenon of dumping is not heartless, but simply reflects the lack of respite facilities in Barbados." *(The Barbados Advocate, 28/4//03. Spotter: Paul Derry)*

— ● —

● Boardroom Biscuits – What Your Biscuit Choice Says About You.

The dynamics of the boardroom are often played out around the biscuit plate. Take one biscuit and you are seen as conformist, two biscuits, confident, and three or more as being overly competitive or aggressive. Research by leading psychologist Gladeana McMahon has shown that boardroom members reveal their personalities through their biscuit-eating behaviour.

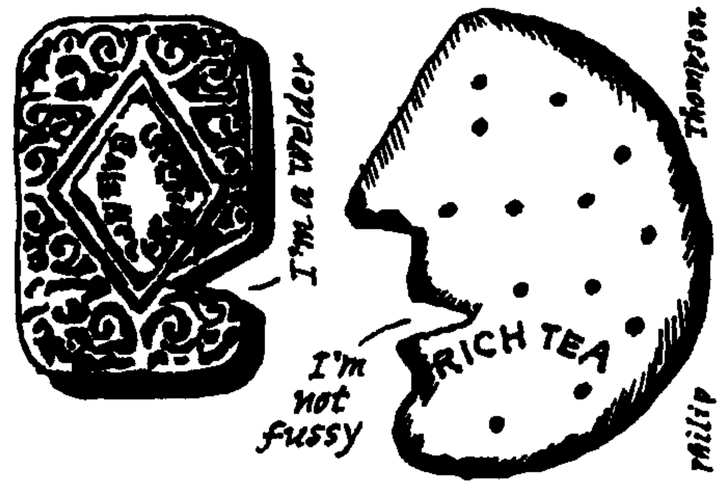
The Co-Ordinator (Chief Executive or Chairman) is someone who likes to clarify goals, promote effective decision making, and has the ability to delegate. Their choice is likely to be a Boaster, a biscuit rich in experience as well as texture.

The Monitor Evaluator (Procurement Director) is sober, strategic and discerning, someone who sees all the options and helps the team to take balanced decisions. They prefer a classic Rich Tea, a simple unfussy biscuit at a reasonable price, broken into pieces and treated with respect.

The Resource Investigator (Business Directors) is extrovert, enthusiastic, and communicative, someone who loves to explore opportunities and create contacts. They like the synergy of the components in a Chocolate Digestive biscuit, and turn dunking into an art form.

The Plant (Marketing and Communications Director) is creative, imaginative, wild and unorthodox, someone who solves difficult problems and advances new ideas and strategies. Jaffa Cakes are a favourite, as the chocolate on the outside belies the pleasure of the orange filling that helps the imagination burst free.

Team Workers build on suggestions while fostering team spirit. They enjoy the reliable way in

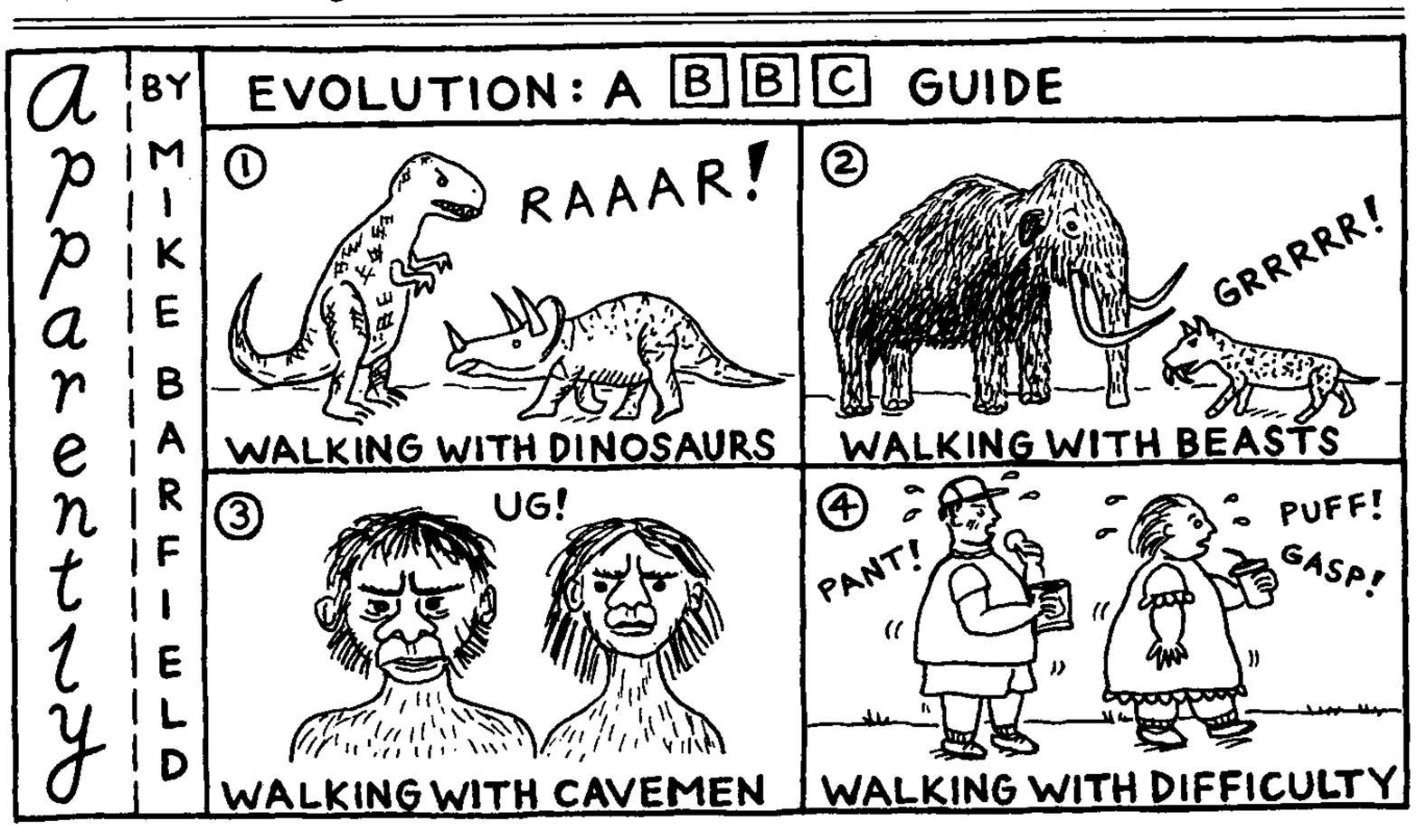


which the filling of a Custard Cream welds the biscuit together, just as a Human Resources Director welds the talents of various people into a winning combination. (UB Research. Spotter: Jamie Oliver)

— ● —

● "The law is perfectly clear," Jerry Jelusich of Multnomah County's Department of Human Services told a press conference in Portland, Oregon, "and it requires us to provide information in all the languages our clients speak. Mental health patients in this county currently speak a total of fifty-five languages, including some rather unusual ones, and that's why we're advertising a post for an interpreter who is fluent in Klingon."

Jelusich was explaining to reporters why government money was being used to fund a post for a linguist specialising in a fantasy language, invented for the Star Trek TV show. "Although it was created by Gene Roddenbury for a work of fiction, the Klingon language was designed from the outset to have a consistent grammar, syntax, and vocabulary. And recent research has shown that many people, and not just fans, now regard Klingon as a complete language. Moreover, we've had a growing number of cases involving mental health patients where Klingon is the only language they would speak. We need to communicate with them somehow, and if hiring a Klingon interpreter enables us to diagnose their problems more effectively, then it's money well spent." *(Florida Sun Sentinel, 11/5/03. Spotter: Stephen Goss)*



ST ALBION PARISH NEWS

Incumbent: Rev. A.R.P. Blair MA (Oxon)

Hullo,

And yet again I find myself addressing the very important question of faith.

A number of parishioners recently have come up to me and said, "Vicar, we've lost our faith. We did believe in what you told us, but now we can't believe it any longer. And the more you tell us to believe, the less we do."

Hey, look, I hear what you're saying, guys! (And girls, obviously! Thanks, Cherie!)

Which one of us has not had his moment of doubt, his 'long, dark night', when he's wondered 'Is it true? Do they really exist?'.

Well, obviously, I haven't had those doubts – because I know! Here in my heart where it matters!

I haven't seen them, any more than you have!

But who are you going to trust? Are you going to stand with your vicar and Rev. Dubya, two fearless soldiers of righteousness with a proven track record in fighting the forces of darkness (Vicar 1, Satan 0!)?

Are you going to believe drunken, embittered women like Mrs Short, or serial adulterers like Mr Cook (his only 'track record', if I recall rightly, was established in the organ loft with Gaynor!).

No offence to either of these former members of the PCC, who served the parish well before becoming mentally ill!

But, when you think of it in that way, there really isn't a choice, is there?

So, let me remind you of a rather important piece of Scripture, which I think gets right to the heart of what you all seem to be worrying about!

"There now remain three very important things – faith, hope and charity (or what we now call 'compassionate giving')."

And how many of the children can tell me how it goes on? Yes, "the greatest of these is faith". By a long way!

With faith you can achieve anything in this world! You don't have to have physical proof for everything!

Life's not like that! If we had to have proof for everything, then what would be the point of faith? Which, as I've just said, is the greatest!

So, for all you fainthearts and backsliders, let me leave you with another very helpful quote from the old 'Good Book' (heavens above, isn't it just packed full of words of wisdom!).

"Seek and ye shall find." How about that then, for some good advice? And that's exactly what we're going to do, Mr Straw, Mr Hoon and I, and thousands of other

willing helpers!

We're going to seek and seek and seek, for just as long as it takes.

It may take weeks, it may take months, it may take years, it may take for ever.

But it is the seeking that is important, not the finding.

I tried to put that into a chorus for our 'Faith Sunday' service next week:

"It's the seeking not the finding that's the thing,
It's the believing, not the seeing,
It's the trusting, not the doubting,
It's the seeking, not the finding that's the thing."

(Tune by the New Seekers, words T. Blair)

Yours,

Tony

PS. And thanks to our former churchwarden for a very touching card, saying simply "I'm a seeker not a finder. Love P.M." Thanks, Pete, and God bless!

St Albion's Olympic Bid

Mrs Jowell writes:

I am really delighted to report that the vicar's wife has very kindly agreed to be our 'standard bearer' in the great St Albion's bid to host the 2024 Olympic Games! It is particularily generous of Cherie to take on this extra 'burden', considering that she is just about the busiest lady in the parish, juggling all the different demands on her time, from being a high-flying career woman and 'supermum' to being a 'fashion icon', not to mention all the support she manages to give the vicar on his various world tours. Cherie is the first to admit that she knows nothing about sport and thinks that competitive games should be abolished, which makes it all the more admirable that she should 'lend us' her charismatic presence presence on the committee at a time when, frankly, St Albion's is not exactly the most 'flavour of the month' parish in the world! (remember 'nul points'!) With Cherie's support we'll certainly score a bit higher than that in 2024! T.J.

A Note from the Editor

A number of correspondents have complained that I am in the habit of "sexing up" some of the vicar's sermons. All I can say is *you try it mate*! These allegations are just total crap. Sometimes I honestly wonder whether it isn't time to jack in this stupid job trying to make the vicar look half way competent, and just piss off, leaving it to that new-age weirdo Carol Caplin to dress him up in a pink kaftan with beads all over him, and see how many idiots turn up to Evensong then! A.C.

NEWCOMERS TO THE PCC

● I expect you've all noticed a new face around the parish recently, and a big impact he's already making on parish life! **"Dr" John Reid**, as he likes to be called, comes to us from Glasgow, where he played an active part in the community as one of the famous Red Brothers, who brought their own brand of "muscular faith" to that troubled city! He already seems to have upset a few people, with his forthright language and physical approach to problem-solving! But isn't that something we could all do with a bit more of? Being shouted at and rammed up against a wall? Good to have you on the team, John!

● Also, a very warm welcome to **Mrs Amos** who has kindly stepped in at short notice after Mrs Short was taken ill and had to be sectioned!

As you will see from her picture, Mrs Amos comes from one of our ethnic communities, not that I had ever noticed the fact myself. However, it has led to several people congratulating me on having the courage to appoint a black person to the PCC for the first time in the history of the parish! T.B.

Parish Postbag

Dear Sir,

If, as I suspect, the vicar has been caught out in a bare-faced lie, then I submit there is only one honourable course left to him, namely

Yours sincerely
Denis Healey (Major, retired),
"Silly Billy", Eyebrow Crescent.

The Editor reseves the right to cut all letters for reasons of space. A.C.

Mr Prescott and that V-sign

Some parishioners have said that they were shocked by Mr Prescott's lighthearted two-finger gesture outside the Vicarage. He has asked me to say on his behalf that if anyone was offended they can "fook off!" Isn't that John all over, bless him? Where would the Parish be without him? T.B.

ME AND MY SPOON

THIS WEEK

GORDON BROWN THE CHANCELLOR OF THE EXCHEQUER

Do you see a case for spoons?

In principle I am in favour of the spoon as a common-sense solution to the stirring problem. But I am not saying it is the *only* solution and I am not convinced that alternative stirring implements are not equally viable.

What are the alternatives?

Well, experience has shown that the plastic or wooden stirrer may be just as effective in the short term without the expense and complication of the spoon option.

But you are not ruling out spoons at some future date?

Let me make this clear. My position on spoons has always been consistent. I am in favour of spoons but only if the advantages of spoon use have been demonstrated to my satisfaction. Obviously a spoon would be very useful for picking up peas but the fact remains that we in this country have always used a fork for that purpose. Should we abandon this pragmatic and traditional approach merely to appease the supporters of the spoon?

You're sounding very spoon-sceptic.

Not at all. If you examine what I've just said I think you'll find I am very supportive of the spoon. It is all a matter of timing. When we should use a spoon and when we should stick to a fork or knife. This is not an all or nothing decision. I have to be satisfied that the conditions are right for the spoon and then – and only then – will I embrace it as the best way forward.

Has anything amusing ever happened to you in connection with a spoon?

This is not a subject that lends itself to humour, in my view.

NEXT WEEK: Andrew Motion – *"Me and My Motions."*

BLAIR TO PRODUCE NEW DOSSIER

by Our Economics Staff **Sterling Loss**

THE Prime Minister today publishes a 3,000-page dossier on the evidence for joining the Euro.

In it he claims that Britain is only 45 minutes away from economic disaster if we do not abolish the evil pound at once.

M.I. Sixpence

The Prime Minister quoted intelligence sources which made it absolutely clear that these pounds were capable of destroying the entire British economy and could destabilise the entire Euro-region unless they were "taken out" and a "currency change" implemented as soon as possible.

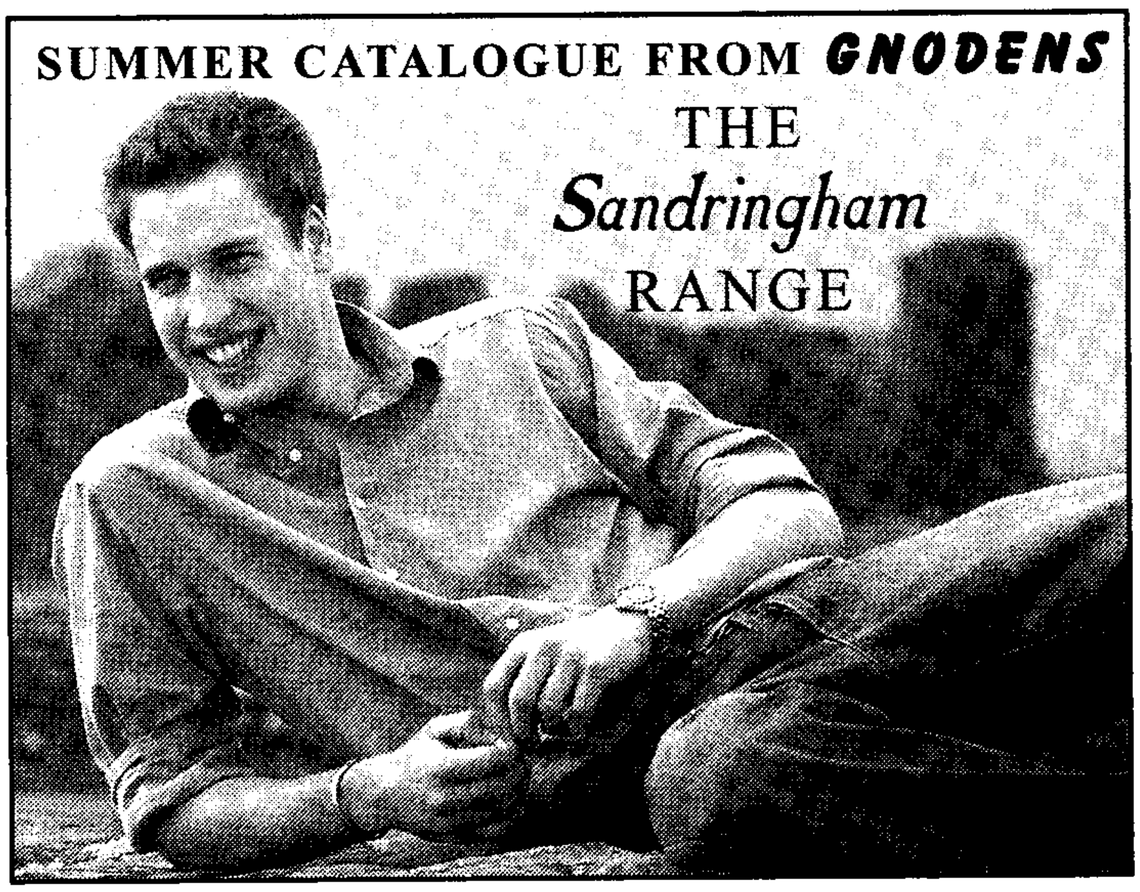
M.I. Fiver

"Future generations would not forgive us," he said, "if we sat on our hands and did nothing."

He continued, "Britain will be welcomed with open arms by grateful Europeans who will be delighted to see the end of the hated pound."

On other pages

Aerial photograph showing secret factory producing lethal coins (Royal Mint) **94**



William is wearing an Indian cotton long-sleeved Hooray shirt with blue denim stone-washed Sloane jeans. His boxer shorts (not shown) are from the Charles Moore Collection. Size: Small, Medium, Large house in the country. All items £6,000 (plus p&p). **William is 21 and an heir to the throne, living in St Andrews. His favourite soup is Brown Windsor. Ambition: To be King.**

'SARA COX INVADED MY PRIVACY' LISTENERS CLAIM Huge Damages Sought

by Our Media Staff **D.J. Taylor**

THOUSANDS of listeners to Radio One claimed yesterday that the disc jockey Sara Cox had come into their front room and talked about sex with no prior consent on their part.

Said one typical listener, "I was disgusted. It was eight in the morning, I was just giving the kids breakfast and there she was polluting the air with her foul language, non-stop smut and sleazy innuendo."

Ms Cox, however, defended her actions, claiming that she had a perfect right to expose herself on radio since it was "a public place" and people had a perfect right to hear her being disgusting if they wanted to *(cont. 94 MHz)*

"I'd like to own my own home"

GLENDA SLAGG

FLEET STREET'S WEAPON OF MAN DESTRUCTION!!!

■ **HILLARY CLINTON – What a star!!? She's America's First Lady when it comes to Standin' By Your Man!?!! Good on you, babe!!?! Your two-timing hubby may have thought he'd got away with it, but now he's paying the Bill!!??! Now *you're* the one who's making millions and making it to the White House!!!!? You get my vote any day?!?**

■ HILLARY CLINTON – What a two-timing cow!?!?! America's First Lady???!? You must be joking!!?!? America's First Bitch more like??!? Fancy dishing the dirt on poor old Bill when all he did was have a bit of fun with busty Monica!!?!?! Who wouldn't???!? Particularly if the option was dried up old stick Hillary!!?!? Take your rotten old memoirs, dearie, and jump off Brooklyn Bridge!!?!?!

■ *NANCY DELL'OLIO!!!!?!?? What a star??!??? She's Britain's First Lady when it comes to Standin' By Your Man??!!!? Good on you, babe!!??!!?* (Haven't we had this bit? Ed.)

■ **NANCY DELL'OLIO!!!? What a two-timing cow!!?!?!** (You've done this. Ed.)

■ HERE THEY ARE – Glenda's Barbecue Boys!!!

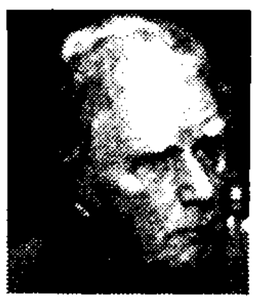
● **Alan Yentob** – *Imagine* giving yourself a job on the telly???!? Geddit???! Great beard, cute arts (geddit????!) Botney-baby!!!!??

● **Alastair Campbell** – You can sex me up any day of the week, Big Boy??? Geddit??!?!?

● **Kriskin** – Crazy name, crazy horse??!?

Byeeee!!!

ART

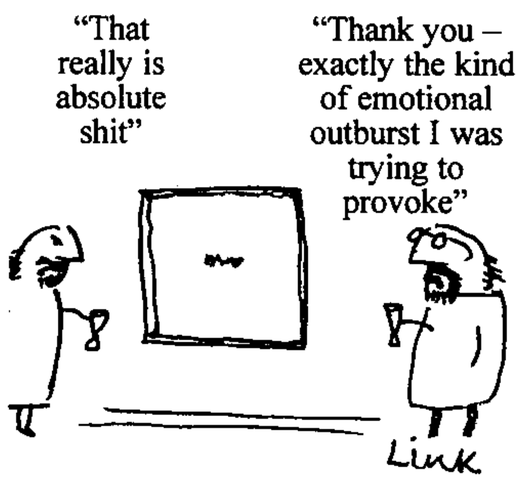


Brian Sewell at The Royal Academy Summer Exhibition

What A Load Of Vulgar Old Tat!

FOR over half a century I have each year viewed with infinite distaste the talentless squaubs and daubs that are passed off to the long-suffering British public as "art", run up by super-annuated schoolmistresses in their bed-sits in Woking, who think that a flatulent water-colour imitation of some package-holiday souvenir postcard showing La Serenissima by moon-light with a mangy cat sitting in the foreground is somehow worthy to be considered as standing in the tradition of Canaletto and Turner (or even Sickert in his pre-Camden Town heyday), and every year I write the same piece.

© R. Sewell 1953-2003.



THE DAILY TELEGRAPH

David Brent Defends 'Boris Johnson' Character

THE popular sitcom character David Brent has insisted that, despite appearances, Boris Johnson represents something special and unique about Britain.

"It's very easy to see Boris Johnson just as a silly figure of fun who has given us hours of laughs with his buffoonish image and hilarious catch-phrases, such as 'I'm an entertainer first and foremost, but I'm also your local MP' and 'Taki still works for the Spectator'," admitted David Brent, speaking from his home in Slough. "But, for me, Boris Johnson represents a part of our character that is quintessentially British.

Star of 'The Spectator Office'

"Where else in the world would you find anyone as ridiculous as Boris?"

CRACKDOWN ON NHS 'TARGETS'

by Our Political Staff **Doctor Spin**

ADMITTING that the health service is collapsing because of the obsession with targets, Health Secretary Alan Millstone yesterday promised to cut targets by 50 percent before 2005.

"If we have reached our target," he said, "we can look forward to a 75 percent improvement in waiting list times by 2006. If we fail to meet the target, I can guarantee that people will only have to wait for three months before another crackdown is announced.

"I am now going to lie down, if I can find a bed."

Late News

The Health Secretary, Mr Alan Heartburn, also announced that the NHS will no longer be treating fat people, people who smoke, people who drink alcohol or people who get ill.

POETRY CORNER

In Memoriam Peter Bromley, racing commentator

So. Farewell then
Peter Bromley,
The BBC's
'Voice of racing'.

"Yes, it's Red Rum!
YES, IT'S RED RUM!
YES, IT'S RED RUM!"

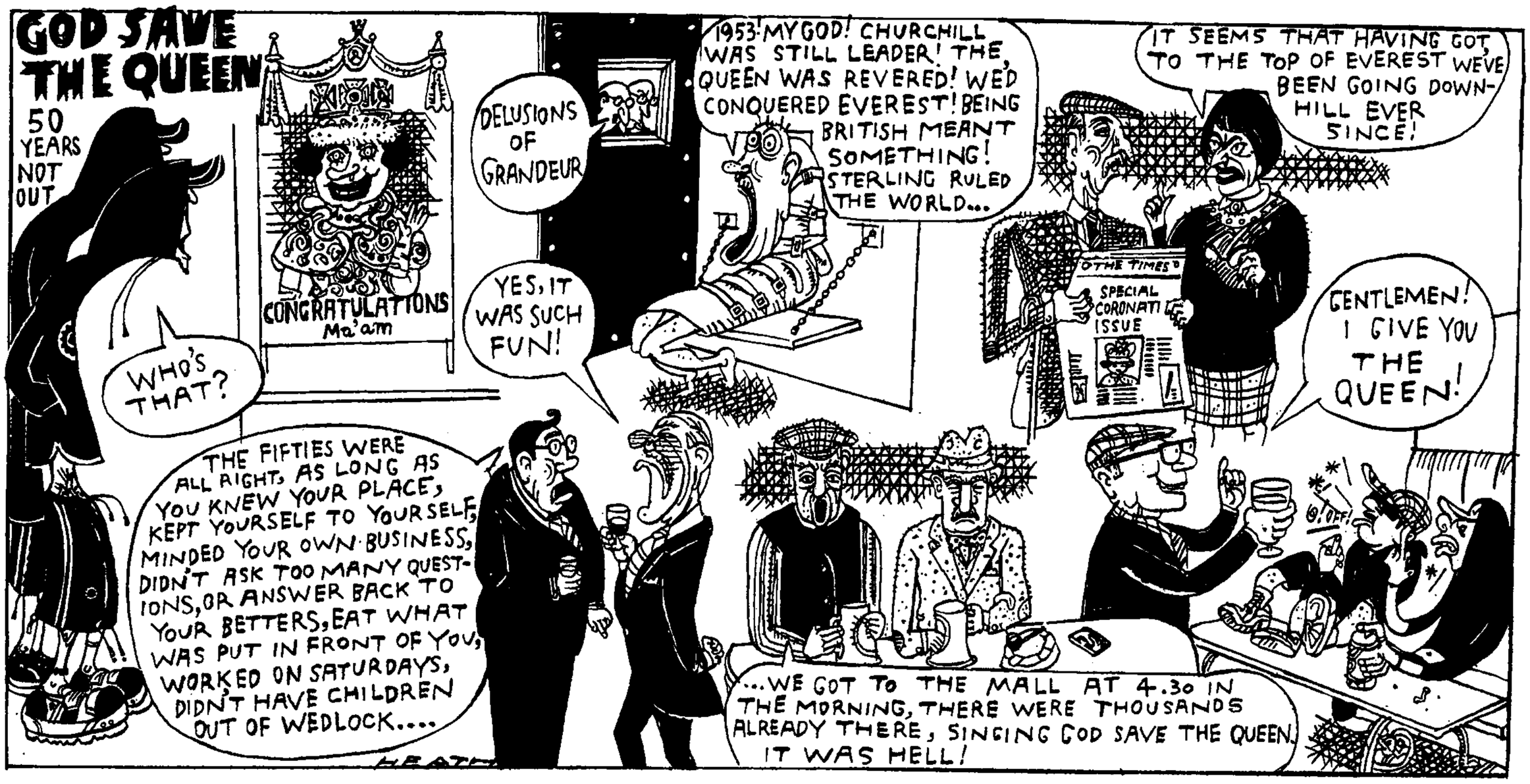
That was your
Catchphrase.
Now you too have reached
The finishing post,
"Yes, it's Peter Bromley!"

E.J. Thribb
(17½ to 1)

Lines on the 100th Birthday of Bob Hope, Comedian

So. Not farewell then,
Yet.

E.J. Thribb
(117½)


GOD SAVE THE QUEEN
50 YEARS NOT OUT
WHO'S THAT?
CONGRATULATIONS Ma'am
DELUSIONS OF GRANDEUR
YES, IT WAS SUCH FUN!
THE FIFTIES WERE ALL RIGHT, AS LONG AS YOU KNEW YOUR PLACE, KEPT YOURSELF TO YOURSELF, MINDED YOUR OWN BUSINESS, DIDN'T ASK TOO MANY QUESTIONS, OR ANSWER BACK TO YOUR BETTERS, EAT WHAT WAS PUT IN FRONT OF YOU, WORKED ON SATURDAYS, DIDN'T HAVE CHILDREN OUT OF WEDLOCK....
1953! MY GOD! CHURCHILL WAS STILL LEADER! THE QUEEN WAS REVERED! WE'D CONQUERED EVEREST! BEING BRITISH MEANT SOMETHING! STERLING RULED THE WORLD...
IT SEEMS THAT HAVING GOT TO THE TOP OF EVEREST WE'VE BEEN GOING DOWN-HILL EVER SINCE!
THE TIMES
SPECIAL CORONATION ISSUE
GENTLEMEN! I GIVE YOU THE QUEEN!
...WE GOT TO THE MALL AT 4.30 IN THE MORNING, THERE WERE THOUSANDS ALREADY THERE, SINGING GOD SAVE THE QUEEN. IT WAS HELL!

The Times Souvenir Edition

50 Years On – The Day No One Will Ever Remember

The Times is privileged to print in advance a facsimile of its special edition to mark the Coronation of King Charles III

THE TIMES

SMALL CROWDS FAIL TO CHEER AS NEW KING IS CROWNED

LONDON SUNSHINE FAILS TO KINDLE ENTHUSIASM

From Our Special Correspondent

As London basked in warm June sunlight, a handful of foreign tourists stood outside Westminster Abbey yesterday to watch the arrival of the elderly King Charles, 100, and his venerable consort, Her Royal Highness Mrs Parker-Bowles, as they climbed out of the Golden Mini-Cab for an informal coronation ceremony, sponsored by Vodafone.

The new-style service, personally devised by the King himself, along with the Archbishop of Canterbury, Mrs Sylvia Onanugu, and the Dean of Westminster, Imam Osama bin Hussein, lasted 20 minutes and incorporated elements of all the world's major religions, except Christianity.

DAY TO FORGET

As the Royal couple walked up the aisle with the aid of their gilt zimmer frames, designed by the King's talented nephew, Lord Linley, they were welcomed by representatives of the King's favourite causes, including:

- the British Society of Watercolourists
- Friends of the Level Crossing
- the Save The House Sparrow Society
- Bring Back Shakespeare Trust

Among the sparse congregation of foreign dignitaries were President Blair of the United States of Europe, President Chelsea Clinton of the USA, and the Grand Zlog of the Martian Republic.

Among those too busy to attend the ceremony were: HRH the Prince William, HRH the Princess Anne not accompanied by one of her many husbands, and Lord Romeo Beckham, Red Shirt Pursuivant and Master of the Royal Tattoos.

After the ceremony, the King laid a wreath on the Tomb of the Unknown Organic Farmer who gave his life at the battle of Monsanto in the great GM wars of the early 21st Century.

As the King was confirmed by the Health and Safety Executive as a "competent person to act as monarch", a choir from St Paul McCartney's Fame Academy performed the anthem "Nul Points".

The King and his wife then made their way to the Westminster Tube Station, accompanied by a team of social workers from the First Battalion of the Household Cavalry.

They then made an appearance on the balcony of their 28th floor flat in the Gordon Brown Tower, Canary Wharf, to witness a fly-past of Lord Branson's "Moon And Back In A Day" Virgin Express spaceship.

NO ONE CLIMBS EVEREST

BRITISH MOUNTAINEERS CELEBRATE CORONATION BY STAYING AT HOME

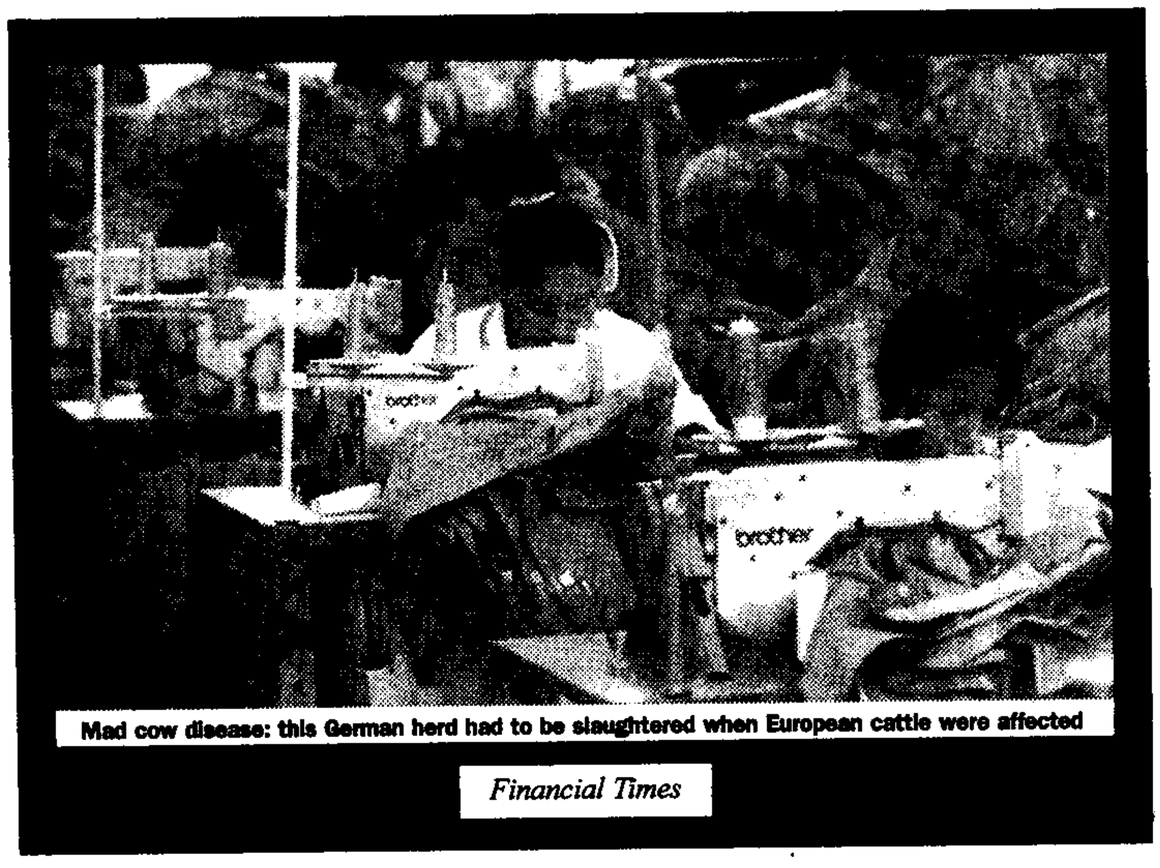
As dawn broke over the Himalayas, an astonishing scene greeted the world's media. For the first time in living memory, no one climbed Everest for an entire day.

Said veteran guide Sherpa Howard, "It was eerie. The great peak towering above us, with not a single climber in sight."

The timing could not have been more perfect. As the new king was crowned 10,000 miles away, not a single British person could be seen standing on the summit of the world's highest mountain, waving a Union Jack and throwing away an empty lager can.

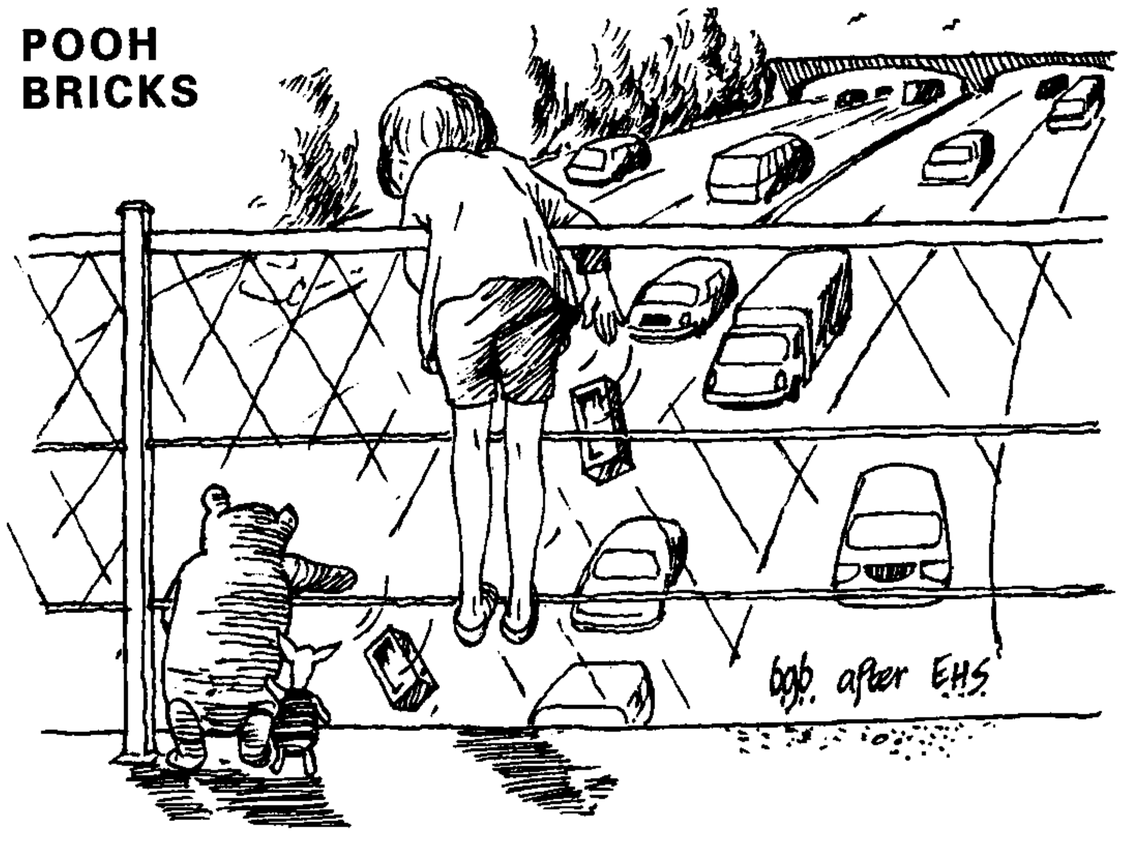
A Coronation Text Message from the Computer Laureate

WL DN CHZ U R KING GR8! ☺



Mad cow disease: this German herd had to be slaughtered when European cattle were affected

Financial Times



Exclusive to all Newspapers

THE EIGHT QUESTIONS THAT BLAIR MUST ANSWER

1 WHEN on September 16 2002 Donald Rumsfeld told Paul Wolfowitz that Tony Blair's 'dossier' was the key evidence which would convince the three wavering African nations on the Security Council (Macaroon, Cote d'Azur and Iguana) to come in behind the draft resolution 1446 which would provide President Bush with the sanction he needed to order *(cont. p. 94)*

IRAQ LATEST

GOVERNMENT DENIES 'SEXING UP' DOSSIER

by Our Intelligence Staff **Piers Brosnan**

A CABINET spokesman furiously denied the charge that the intelligence dossier on the weapons of mass destruction had been "exaggerated".

"This suggestion," said the spokesman, "is the most outrageous, dangerous and evil suggestion that has ever been made in the history of the world. Making this suggestion actually puts British lives at risk. We could be talking about millions of deaths within 45 minutes of the suggestion being made. Whoever is saying that we exaggerated the findings of the dossier is as bad as Hitler and should be removed at all costs, if necessary by invading the MI6 building and bombing it into oblivion."

WEAPONS INSPECTORS FIND 'THE SMOKING PANTS'

by **W.M. Deedes**

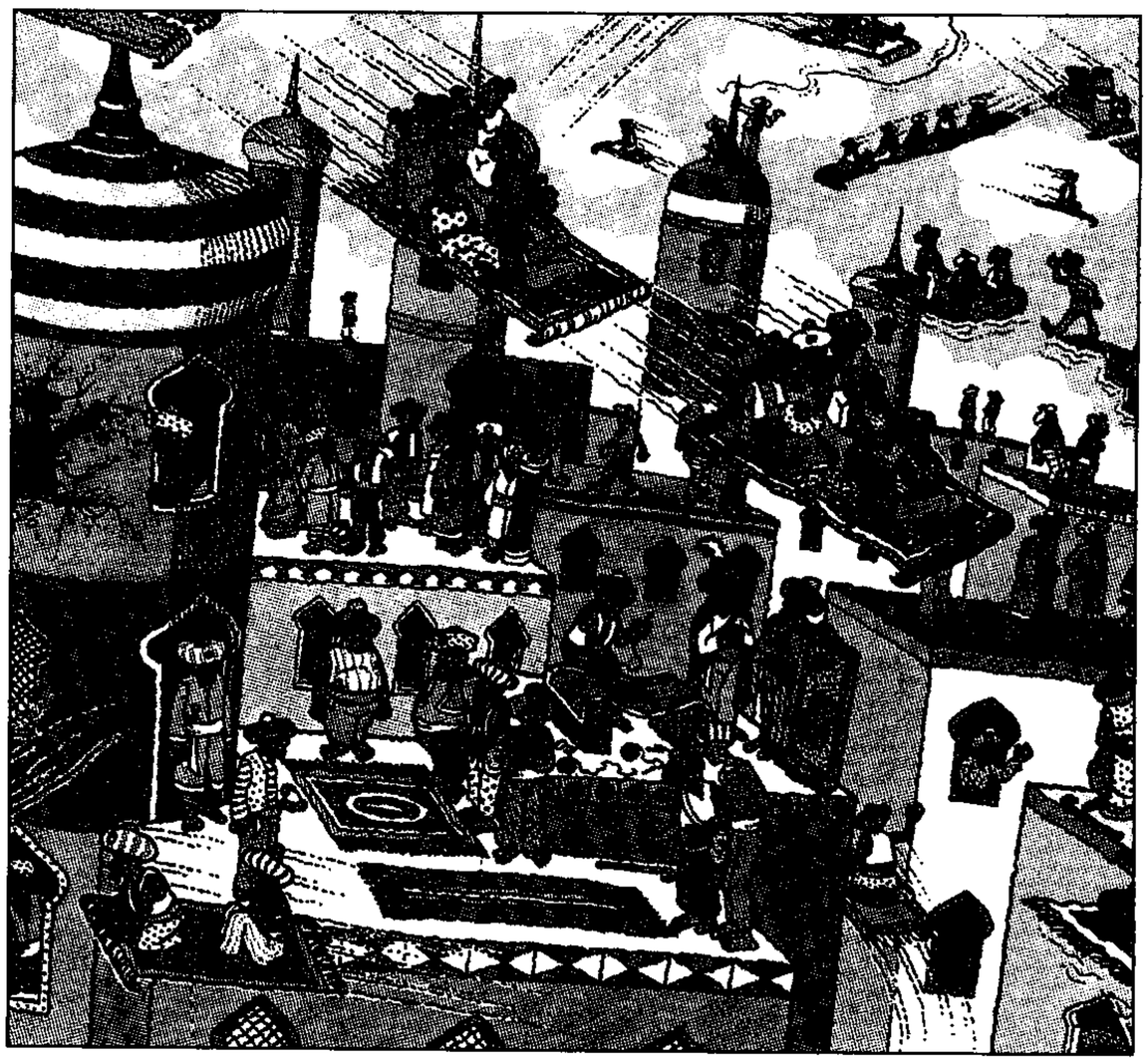
A TEAM of UN inspectors have at last reported the discovery of the vital evidence in the hunt for the Iraqi Weapons of Mass Destruction – a pair of smoking pants believed to have been worn by Tony Blair.

"If these pants are genuine," said Mr Hansup, "then it proves that they were definitely on fire whilst Blair was wearing them and that all his statements about WMDs were lies."

Mr Bliar is 50 (or maybe he isn't – you never know with him).

MICHAEL JACKSON IN FINANCIAL CRISIS

Where's WMD?



YES, IT'S BACK! The puzzle sensation that will keep you occupied for months. Can YOU find the weapons of mass destruction hidden somewhere in Baghdad? No. That's because there aren't any. Now who's the Wally?

© T. Blair Publishing

TORY FURY AS COUGH TURNS NASTY

by Our Political Staff **E. Nose**

ANGRY TORIES rounded on their leader Iain Duncan Cough last night after he had launched a surprise attack on the Prime Minister during Question Time.

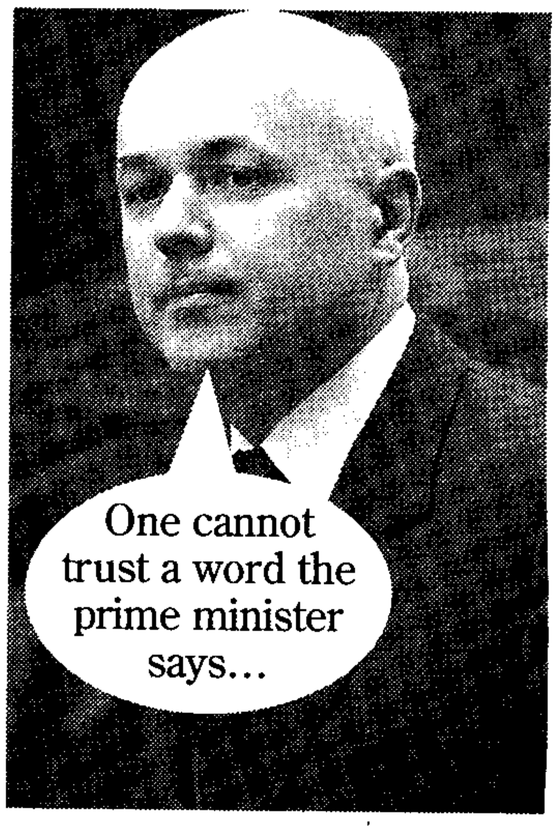
Mr Cough shocked MPs when he broke his long-standing tradition of supporting everything that Mr Blair says.

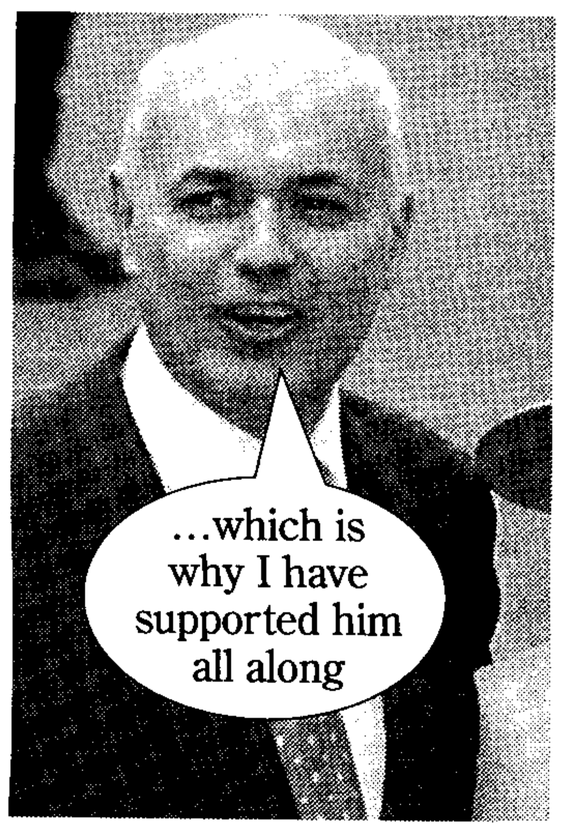
Said one horrified senior Tory backbencher, "It is not the job of the Leader of the Opposition to criticise the Prime Minister, who is doing a very good job at a difficult time.

"What's more," continued the unnamed Tory grandee, "people like Tony Blair and they don't like Iain much. So it would make more sense if he just kept quiet and said nothing, like he used to do.

"If he carries on with this yah-boo hooligan approach, we might even get some votes at the next election."

THE WEAPONS OF SELF DESTRUCTION





ZIMBABWE – OUR BOYS DON'T GO IN

by Our War Staff
Sir Kevin Keegan and
Rageh Omaar Sharif

BRITAIN's greatest war-time prime minister of the 21st century today told the UN Security Council that Britain had no plans to force "regime change" on Zimbabwe.

"Mugabe," he said, "has shown the world that he is a murderous dictator who has subjected his own people to years of systematic torture and brutal repression.

"It would be all too easy to invade the country and topple this hated dictator, so that his people can be free.

"But I have to tell you, in all sincerity, that history would not forgive us if we acted now, rather than doing nothing.

"All morality dictates that we must stand idly by and let Mr Mugabe do whatever he likes."

Mr Blair later visited Aldershot where he addressed cheering troops, telling them "the country deeply appreciates your superb professionalism in keeping your barracks clean and polishing your boots, rather than going off to Africa to fight in some silly neo-colonialist war."

John Simpson reports from the BBC Canteen

There is an eerie calm here in London tonight as the whole nation prepares not to go to war.

Here in White City I can tell you that the mood is tense, as people face the moment of decision which will dictate whether they watch the snooker or Big Brother 7 (cont. p. 94)

POLLY FILLER

YOU think they are having a bad time in Ethiopia? What about those of us on book tours? Yesterday, on Radio Basildon's morning phone-in, I didn't get offered a glass of water for an hour! And then it was non-carbonated! And as for the sandwiches at Books Etc in Bracknell – well, I'm afraid even a starving Somalian would have drawn the line at the crayfish and rocket!

As you may have gathered, yours truly has been slogging her guts out on the promotion trail for my best-selling novel *Mummy For Old Rope.*

I've been trying to juggle signing sessions and media appearances with organising childcare for half-term – or hell-f-term as I call it! Why is it that hopeless girls from the Congo can't manage to get to Legoland without ringing me up when I'm in the middle of an interview with Meridian TV's Simon Trench!! Honestly, it was just like a scene from my best-selling novel, *Mummy For Old Rope*, where the heroine Jilly Fuller is rung up in the middle of a TV interview with Trench TV's Simon Meridian! Talk about life imitating art, or is it the other way round? As Jilly quips in chapter three of my best-selling novel *Mummy For Old Rope*, "It's all gone au-pair shaped!".

NEEDLESS to say, the useless Simon has been no help at all as I've dragged myself around the celebrity book circuit – whenever I've rung to check whether toddler Charlie has been read a bedtime story (by Stephen Fry on tape, of course!), he's been watching 'Toilets of the Rich and Famous', presented by Paul Ross on Digital E4 Lifestyle Gold!

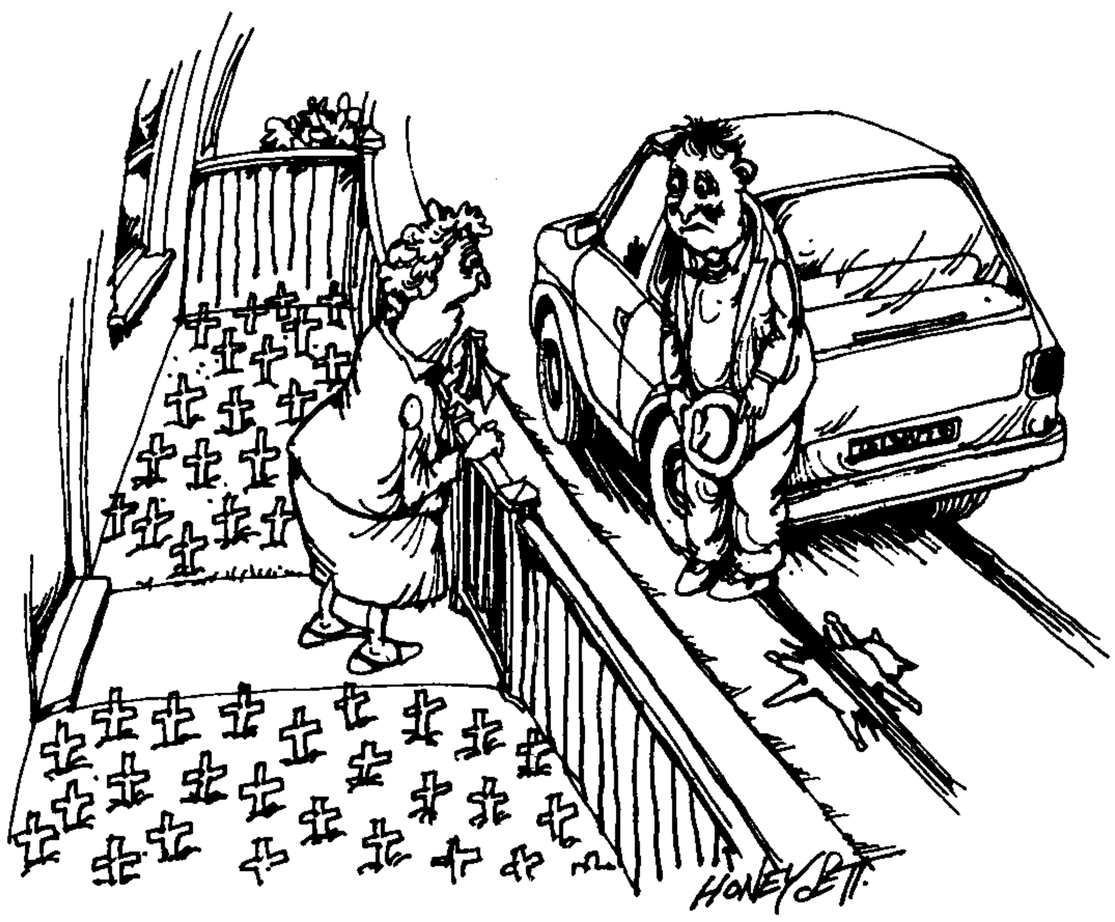
Got to dash! Fans to meet! Public to please! A girlfriend said to me recently, "I haven't seen you for ages!" and I told her, "Darling, *I* haven't seen me for ages!" See you in the signing queue!

© Polly Filler

THE WEEK IN PICTURES

WMD BREAKTHROUGH

BUSH SORTS IT OUT



"Yes, well, that's the problem with living on such a busy road"

BUSH MEETS SCHROEDER

BECKHAM KIDNAP CASE THROWN OUT OF COURT

by Our Legal Staff **Joshua Rosenberg**

THE BECKHAM kidnap trial collapsed yesterday when the judge ruled that the prosecution case was based on "an obvious hoax" viz that the News of the World was a newspaper.

The judge said, "It is quite evident that there has been a deliberate deception practised on all parties by a gang of unsavoury individuals masquerading as journalists."

News of the Screwups

He told the court, "This gang, led by a woman called Rebekah, was out to take as much money as it could from the public. One of the members, Mr Mazher Mahmood, posed as a reporter in order to persuade gullible readers to buy fabricated stories about Posh and Becks. He has a long history of doing this sort of thing, sometimes dressing up in full costume with a dirty raincoat and a trilby hat with a ticket marked 'Press' stuck in the brim."

Mazzive Fraud

In his defence, Mr Mahmood said, "It was perfectly legitimate for me to disguise myself as a journalist, otherwise people would have been suspicious when I gave them a huge cheque for making things up."

Dosh and Bucks

The judge, however, concluded that there was no evidence whatsoever that the News of the World was a newspaper or that it was ever going to run a legitimate story.

"The whole thing," he summed up, "is a sleazy, money-making scam."

The former editor of the News of the World, Ms Rebekah Wad, said that the judge's account of events was a tissue of lies and offered him £20,000 for the serialisation.

THE BIG READ

Britain's 100 Best-Loved Novels That Have Been Made Into Films

— No. 94. —
Rebekah
by Daphne Du Moron

"LAST NIGHT I dreamed of Money again..." The unforgettable opening sentence of Britain's 94th best-loved romantic novel plunges us at once into the mysterious world of flame-haired tempestuous beauty Rebekah who has fallen under the spell of the evil but fabulously rich foreign financier Rupert le Digger.

What is his dark secret? Why is everyone in his employ obsessed with Money? Why does he keep looking at her in an odd way, as if he feels he has made a terrible mistake? What is the explanation for the mysterious telephone calls in the middle of the night? And what is the relationship between the ruthless billionaire and his sinister Oriental housekeeper Mrs Wendy Dengvers? Will the atmosphere of growing menace culminate in someone being fired?

Macca and Heather's Baby – YOU decide the name

Boy	Girl
Paul	Heather
George	Eleanor Rigby
Ringo	Jude
Not John	Penny Lane
Sergeant Pepper	Strawberry
Father McKenzie	Lovely Rita
Scouser	Mull of Kintyre
Maharishi	Not Linda
Peregrine Worsthorne	Not Yoko

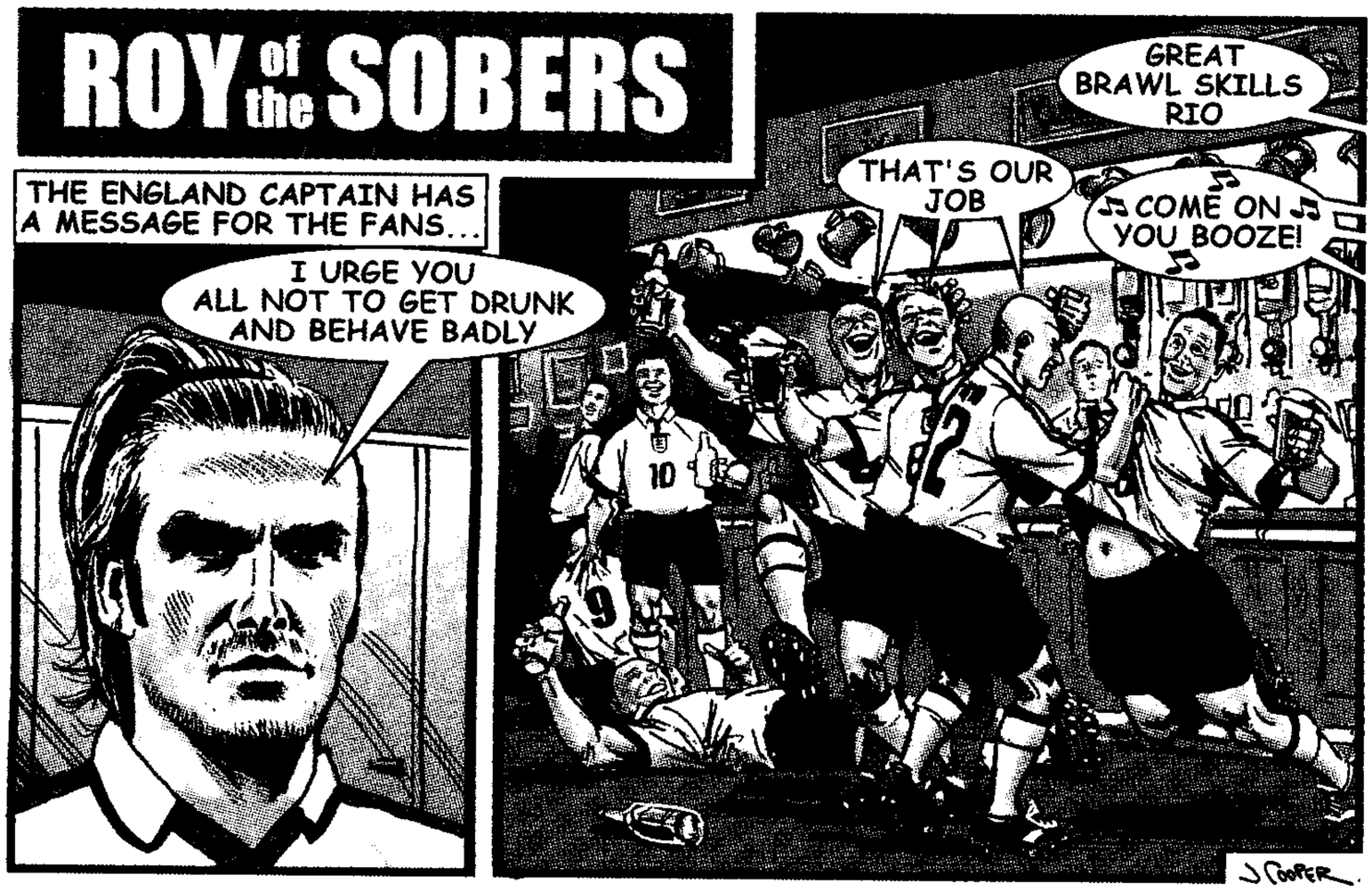
Ringo now on 0860 2000 and you can win a free *Best Of Wings* CD

Hurry, hurry – only eight million copies to be won!

WMD Catering Equipment

Advertisement

ROY of the SOBERS


THE ENGLAND CAPTAIN HAS A MESSAGE FOR THE FANS...
I URGE YOU ALL NOT TO GET DRUNK AND BEHAVE BADLY
GREAT BRAWL SKILLS RIO
THAT'S OUR JOB
♫ COME ON YOU BOOZE! ♫
J COOPER

BRAINTEASER
with 'Brainteaser'

No. 94
The Cretan Paradox

Tony is a politician.
John says that Tony never lies.
John is also a politician.
Are we to conclude that:

A. John is lying?

B. Tony is lying?

C. They are both saintly figures who should be believed in all circumstances?

D. They really should leave this kind of thing to Alastair Campbell who does it much better?

DIARY

I couldn't speak. I could hardly breathe. I was gulping for air. I couldn't take it any more. There was only one thing left to do. I took it out of my mouth and bundled it back in his pants.

As I gasped for breath, he just stood there saying over and over again, "I'm sorry. I'm so sorry". Then he glanced down and added, "Look, honey! – my little pal wants to say he's sorry too!"

What was Bill talking about? Did he honestly think I could go on being amused by his 'little pal' – after all it had had put me through?

I started crying and yelling at him. "From now on, you're going to have to get someone else to do that for you, *Bill Clinton*!" He just *stood* there saying over and over again, "I'm sorry, I'm so sorry."

I was dumbfounded, heartbroken and outraged. I had the future of our great country in my hands. The men, women and children of our nation had come to value my counsel, my compassion, my fierce belief in fighting to improve the delivery of hair care for one and all – but at this crucial point in our history my husband seemed to have just one thing on his mind.

"I'm sorry, I'm so sorry," he kept repeating. Then he brushed away the tears and looked me sincerely in the face.

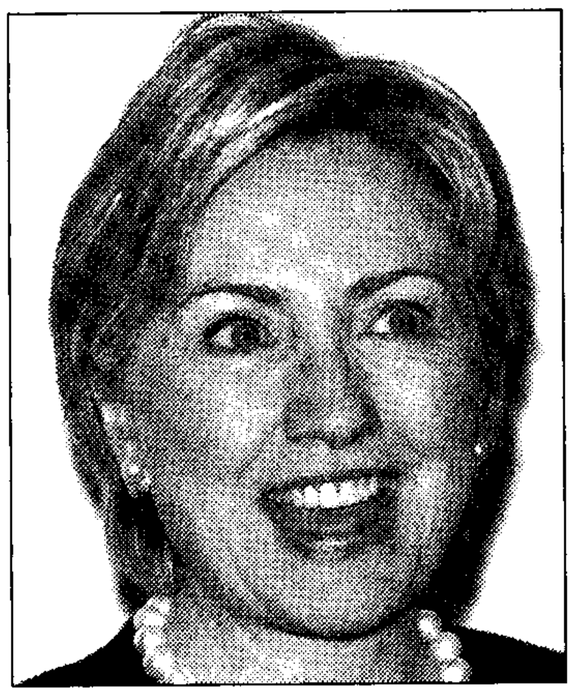
"You know what my little pal is saying, Hillary? You know what he's saying? He's saying 'Howsabout a quickie, hon?'"

I was left with nothing but profound sadness, disappointment and unresolved anger.

Once, it had all been so very different. Bill Clinton was hard to miss in the autumn of 1970. He arrived at Yale Law School looking more like a Viking than a Rhodes Scholar. He'd never go anywhere without that winged helmet of his, and on our early meetings in the law library he'd pull out his manhood and waggle it in the air with true pride, like it was some kind of ancient fertility symbol. It was true then, and it remains true to this day: the vitality of Bill Clinton seemed to shoot out of his pores.

After all that has happened since, I'm often asked why Bill and I have stayed together. It's not a question I welcome. What has kept our marriage together, throughout my husband's Presidency and subsequently my own hugely successful period in the Senate?

Bill Clinton and I started a conversation in the spring of 1971. It began when I said "Put it



HILLARY RODHAM CLINTON

away!" and he replied, "Sorry, honey." I just loved the way he looked so full of shame. More than 30 years later, we're still having that same conversation.

Would we throw it all away? Bill still had that infectious optimism I had been so attracted by all those years ago. But if I gave it one hundred per cent, that was something I could knock on the head.

Bill had betrayed the trust in our marriage. As his wife, I wanted to wring Bill's neck. But he was not only my husband, he was also my President. I would have to go deep inside myself and my faith to discover any remaining belief in our marriage, to find some path to understanding. After a long, hard search, we found that abiding agreement, and we felt able to sign it in the presence of our lawyers.

I didn't know whether our marriage could – or should – survive such a stinging betrayal, but I knew I had to work through my feelings carefully, on my own timetable, for my own agenda.

So when Bill came to say sorry, I immediately said "I can fit you in Tuesday, 10.15." Following negotiations, we agreed to attend a joint Prayer Group, with specially-written hymns of reconciliation sung by our good friend Willie Nelson, and a truly beautiful bible reading by legendary Vogue editor Anna Wintour. And this was to be a very, very private occasion: only selected television stations would be in attendance, and the cream of the White House press corps.

One day in September 1998, when the vast right-wing conspiracy was well underway, and we were in the midst of our troubles, Stevie Wonder called and asked if he could come and see me.

"How can he? The guy's BLIND!" was my intial reaction. But as the wife of Bill Clinton, I felt I had a lot to learn from Stevie's condition.

Stevie was escorted into a room where there was a grand piano, and he began to sing a haunting, lilting melody with beautifully moving lyrics, something along the lines of "Nah nah nah, forgiveness in your heart, nah nah nah, feels so right, nah nah nah."

Tears filled my eyes as I tiptoed away and closed the door. By the time I got back from my duties, Stevie was almost done. He had kicked his seat backwards and was saying "C'mon, ever'body – clap yo' hands!" I didn't like to tell him we were alone in that room. Instead, I treasured it as a beautiful gesture from a truly huge celebrity.

Word of Stevie's visit soon got out. The next day, our good friend Barbra Streisand called and asked if she could come and see me at the White House in order to ease my sadness with a medley of her Greatest Hits. Her gesture touched my heart. But I had to tell her that Gene Pitney, Gloria Gaynor, Kris Kristofferson, Shania Twain and Huey Lewis and the News were first in line, with top magician David Copperfield booked for early the following Thursday.

It all ended happily, very, very happily. I was sworn in as a Senator for New York in early January, 2001. Two weeks later, Bill's presidency came to an end. We said our farewells in the Grand Foyer of The White House. Under the watchful eye of the assembled cameras, my husband embraced me in his arms and turned it into a dance. We skipped and twirled across the marble floor as we waltzed together down the long hall, and when I came back, the former President had disappeared, to be seen again in my company only when it was strictly necessary. It was one of those truly magical moments, and one I shall never forget.

As told to
CRAIG BROWN

Celeb

LIGGER

ANYTHING IN THE WEEKLIES I SHOULD KNOW ABOUT, JOHNSON?
I'M AFRAID SO, SIR. YOU'RE NOT GOING TO LIKE THIS ONE BIT.
HEAT MAGAZINE HAVE RUN A FEATURE ON DRUNK CELEBRITIES, COMPLETE WITH EMBARRASSING PHOTOS OF STARS LOOKING THE WORSE FOR WEAR...
OH GOD.
HOW BAD HAVE THEY MADE ME LOOK?
VERY BAD INDEED, SIR.
YOU'RE NOT IN IT.
SPITEFUL LITTLE BASTARDS!

Literary Review

Uncle Sham

The Burned Children of America
(Hamish Hamilton, £10)

THE jury bidden to consider this spring's *Granta*-sponsored "Best of British Young Novelists" promotion were back inside the courtroom before the judge had time to readjust his wig. Their verdict, with which members of the selection panel were hastily forced to concur, was a merciless thumbs-down: not a patch on the 1993 list, which itself was but a pale simulacrum of 1983's exploding firmament of McEwan, Barnes, Boyd and co.

Yet any young native hopeful (Rachel! Monica! Phil!) whose eye happens to fall on this bunch of transatlantic hipster contemporaries will probably end up feeling rather reassured, for *The Burned Children of America* – a US equivalent of the *Granta* list – is quite the worst assemblage of West Atlantic talent unleashed on these shores in years.

Practically everything about the enterprise is calculated to stir the gravest forebodings among a British readership that has spent the past 20 years having the superiority of American writing dinned into its consciousness by everyone from Martin Amis to Bill Buford.

First there is that Zadie Smith benediction – the full title of the book, according to the jacket, is actually *Zadie Smith introduces The Burned Children of America*, don't you know, with Ms Smith's name reproduced in type five times the size of that allowed to her contributors.

Then there is the price – £10 for a pocket-sized paperback of a kind usually on sale at £6.99. Finally there is the entirely bogus claim to novelty, the thought that what we have here is simply awash with fresh young talent, when a quick nose between the covers reveals work by such long-term ornaments of the modern American scene as Rick Moody and David Foster Wallace, or the tabloid-enraging A.M. Homes, whose stuff has been clogging up the gay short story anthologies since the early '90s.

Confronted by one of these self-proclaimed generational shop-windows, one looks instantly for procedural tics. And yup, you guessed it, everything is very wound-down and detached around here, very post-post-modern and knowing, with narrative taking a bad second place to the conceit.

Rick Moody (*Circulation*) ventures a coy little riff about the adventures of a paperclip (yeah, sure there are some symbolic add-ons, but basically this is the story of a paperclip, right?) Aimee Bender whistles in with a piece about a boy "born with fingers shaped like keys". There are gravely wide-eyed experiments with lay-out and punctuation (Jonathan Safran Foer), epistolary lark-abouts (Dave Eggers' effort consists of half-a-dozen letters sent to US corporate CEOs concering the activities of a dog named "Steve") and a general habit of kicking things off with a sentence of such self-conscious kookiness ("I once loved a woman who grew teeth all over her body" – Julia Slavin) that the reader – this being American fiction dammit – just pines for a little shack way out west, the unforgiving California sun and some characters who give the faint impression of being tethered to what passes for reality.

Striving manfully in her frat-house newsletter intro to locate some kind of motivating force behind these serial variations on what might be called the modern US campus style, Zadie Smith can only come up with an America that is "more muted, the characters less hysterical in their trajectory, at odds with themselves, uncertain. Sad." I fear there is a more fundamental link.

From the opening lines of Shelley Jackson's *Sleep* ("Sleep is falling. The crumbs run in drifts down the street, collect in the gutters") to Ken Kalfus's *Invisible Malls* (the modern American shopping experience redone by Marco Polo) the whole thing simply reeks of the creative writing class. You can just see them all – Dave, Rick and the others – sitting sternly around the seminar table just itching to transmit the *rilly good ideas* they've come up with while Zadie sashays in with a tray of Bud Ice and a handful of Pro-Plus tablets.

Happily *The Burned Children of America* also contains one or two spectacular flights, in particular David Foster Wallace's title-inducing *Incarnations of Burned Children* and a smart piece by Jeffrey Eugenides about a man whose father buys an unrentable motel. The rest, though, is just the usual self-absorbed saddo maundering, from a literary landscape which now looks institutionalised to the point of no return.

Books & Bookmen

■ TWO books on corruption in the Metropolitan police are due out soon, despite the efforts of one set of authors to "grass-up" their rival.

The books are *Bent Coppers* by award-winning former BBC investigative and home affairs journalist Graeme McLagan, and *The Untouchables* by the award-winning former *Guardian* journalists Michael Sean Gillard and Laurie Flynn.

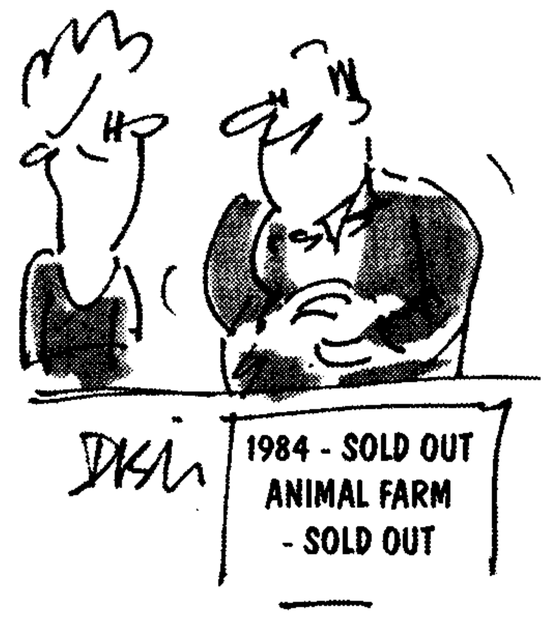
McLagan's book should have been out last year, but his former publisher, the independent Piatkus – more used to the less contentious end of non-fiction publishing – got cold feet. Piatkus had received letters from some alleged bent coppers' solicitors – including our old friends Russell Jones and Walker – demanding advance copies and threatening legal action.

But Judy Piatkus, who founded the company more than 20 years ago and is now its md, had also received a letter from Gillard and Flynn themselves. They suggested that their adversary's senior police contacts in the anti-corruption squad were themselves the subject of investigation. What's more, they told her that the way in which Knacker of the Yard can manipulate reporters was to be a central theme of their book – as if an experienced hack like McLagan might not realise it.

However, McLagan has the last laugh. Weidenfeld took up his draft and the book is out this week, while Gillard and Flynn's, to be published by Mainstream, is apparently not due till the autumn. Adding insult to injury the *Guardian*, with whom Gillard and Flynn fell out so dramatically over the very same police corruption and police influence issues, ran a story from McLagan's book at the weekend.

■ **VIEWERS of BBC's *Breakfast With Frost* are used to Frost's embarrassing compulsion to brown nose his guests – the only reason many of them must deign to appear at all.**

But his obsequiousness when "broadcaster and authoress of the very successful *I Don't Know How She Does It*" – aka Allison Pearson



"Orwell that sells well"

– appeared on the show to review the papers scaled new heights.

"How well is it doing?" interrupted Frost, prompting Pearson to remind viewers that "it's doing well and it's out in paperback". Two more plugs followed before Pearson reviewed an article about working mothers, which just happens to be the subject of her "novel" – just out in the US.

"I'd love to read it, but I don't like the pink cover," revealed fellow guest Matthew Parris, allowing Frost to get in a plug for the book himself. "This book is doing a public service in the USA," he declared.

■ NEWS that Simon & Schuster is confident of recouping almost all its £350,000 advance to Robin Cook through serialisation fees from one newspaper suggests a whole new approach to the publishing game.

While Edwina Currie and Ulrika Jonsson last year more than justified the cash the *Times* and *Mail* splashed out to serialise their respective autobiographies, the massive publicity their sexual revelations received meant that sales of the books themselves were pitiful.

Is the time approaching when publishers will decide to cut out the middleman altogether and stop publishing books in favour of simply acting as rivals to Max Clifford?

WHAT THEY ARE WORTH: RECENT SERIALISATIONS

Posh Spice = £900,000

Ulrika Jonsson = £700,000

Anne Robinson = £500,000

Robin Cook = £300,000

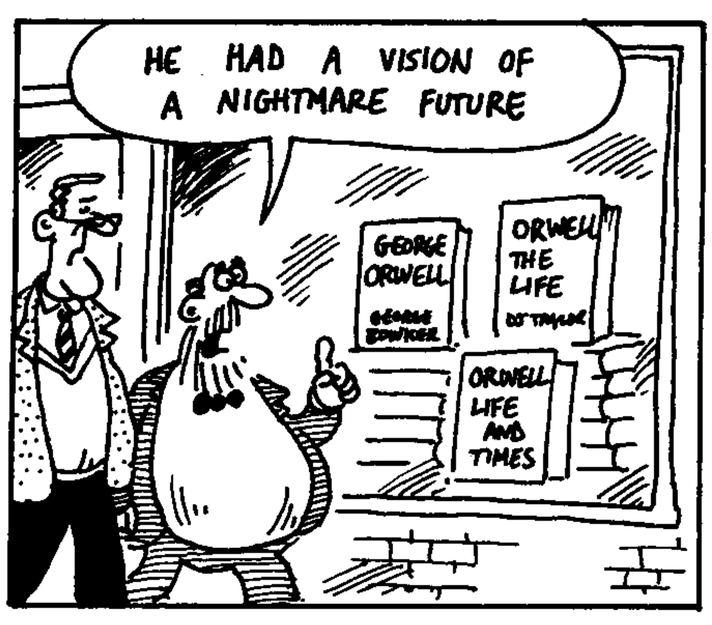
John Major = £200,000

■ *PEARSON is apparently still struggling to recover from its £25m losses in 2002 since it is now charging freelance educational writers for the privilege of writing for its text books.*

Pearson Education has just signed up to a paperless invoicing network system run by Open Business Exchange. The system is being touted as easier for everyone. However, to be included on the network – the only way to be paid – freelancers must hand over a £25-plus-VAT annual subscription fee.

Bizarrely, in a letter to the freelancers Pearson describes the system as "cheaper than current paper-based invoicing". Yes, but not for the writers.

'Bookworm'



Ali, Smith and clones

Brick Lane
Monica Ali
(Doubleday, £12.99)

WHEN Monica Ali was named one of Granta's 20 best young authors in January, some eyebrows were raised. Not because Ali was 35 and nor because she was thought to be anything less than a capable writer. The reason was that no one knew what sort of a writer she was because she hadn't published anything and wasn't due to for five months.

Either way, something about Ali had obviously grabbed the judges. Perhaps it was simply a desire to back the right horse. After all, there were naysayers in the book trade who thought Zadie Smith's initial £250,000 advance was rash, and they all look a bit silly now.

Monica Ali and Zadie Smith are both young women of mixed race who have chosen to write about multi-cultural London. Like Smith's debut, *Brick Lane* is epic in scope, audacious in vision, manifold and mosaic in detail. With the hype-mill in full swing, you can see why Granta didn't want to mess up.

In fact, although there are copious comparisons to be made with Smith's debut, the most important one is that roundly speaking they are both impressive first tries. The interesting question is whether *Brick Lane* might have been even more impressive if Ali had been allowed to write her story rather than the one the hype-mill demanded.

In the wake of Smith's success, stories-by-mixed-race-women-about-multi-cultural-London comes with certain strictures, and there is every suggestion that these have left *Brick Lane* a worse novel than it could have been.

It tells the story of Nazneen, a Bangladeshi woman who finds herself deposited in Tower Hamlets aged 18 on the back of an arranged marriage. Her allotted husband Chuna, she soon discovers, is proud, self-deluding and feckless; his one saving grace is that he doesn't beat her up. Nazneen's friends assure her that among Bangladeshi men this marks him out as a diamond.

Everything good in the novel stems from Ali's exploration of the clash between the Mymensingh District of East Pakistan and the Rosemead Estate of sunny Tower Hamlets. All of the staples of the technicoloured culture clash are here: curry vs chips; burkhas vs tracksuits; and the struggle for the pristine past to comprehend the fuzzy future.

Ali weaves in tensions between generations as well as cultures. Funny and sad, it succeeds for the same reasons the film *East is East* did, or for that matter *White Teeth*. Again, one senses that the grotesque Chanu, the recalcitrant children rebelling against their backwards father, the tender relationships of the ghetto – all of these spring from an urge to write the book that will keep the publishers happy. They are well observed, but they have been observed before.

Though this type of familiarity doesn't breed too much contempt, there are a couple of further taints. Ali overstretches herself by interweaving letters from Nazneen's disgraced sister, detailing her plight back in Bangladesh. The idea is to show that Nazneen's suffering is as nothing compared to life in the Third World, underlining the post-Zadie view of multicultural Britain which is, ultimately, a cosy one. But the pidgin English doesn't quite come off and the letters ramble on. Ali's England is much more convincing than her Bangladesh – but to do a Zadie you've got to keep one eye on foreign shores.

The other downer is the introduction of a dashing love interest named Karim. He's a go-getting young Bangla stud from the local sweatshop designed to make Nazneen reassess life with the plodding fatso Chanu. But inexplicably he also turns out to be a political firebrand, growing a beard and becoming embroiled in just about every Muslim political concern of the last decade.

Clashes with the BNP lead to the establishment of the Bengal Tigers, who, like the ultra-Muslim group KEVIN in *White Teeth*, become an irritating contrivance. Suddenly 9/11 looms into view, along with economic migrants and the Oldham race riots. The relationship between Nazneen and Karim is by far the stodgiest part of the book – one senses that Ali felt the need to pile on the contemporariness to appease the person writing the dust-cover blurb. Add this failing to the other requirements of London post-*White Teeth* and you are left with a pretty good novel that's been mutilated by the publicity department. It's just like Chanu says: "Marketing. Biggest god of all."

JUST FANCY THAT!

"Is it therefore time to ban references to the great man, and particularly to his novel *Nineteen Eighty-Four*? This may seem a harsh proposal from a journal whose pages he once graced, but he has become almost a cliché, a lazy resort for writers with axes to grind and weak arguments to support them... Orwell deserves better than to become a hack's prop."

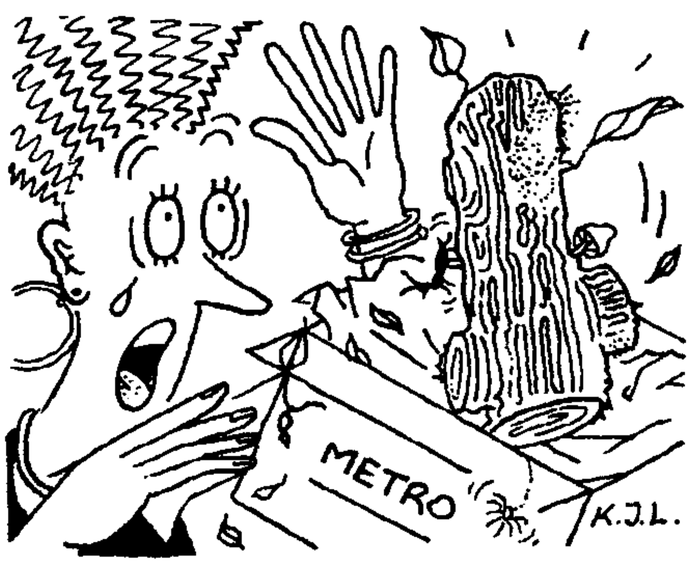
— *New Statesman*, 2 June, leader column, p7.

"When the government says we will fight Aids in Africa but also says no one can distribute or even mention condoms, I know I'm in the Orwellian world of *Nineteen Eighty-Four*."

— *New Statesman*, 2 June, feature by Sara Paretsky, p20.

[Damon Albarn] is making up for being out of the limelight: eyes bulging, jaw locked, wringing with sweat, willing the crowd – in a faintly Nietzschean sense – to love the new stuff.

KITTY EMPIRE
Observer Review



We employ Muslim women refugees, use unionised factories, run a "fair trade" project in Brazil and our wooden dildos are made from naturally felled trees.

SAM RODDICK on her ethical sex shop, *Metro*

Masterclass in 'Cut-up Technique' with Dr Francis C Biley
This workshop builds on pRevious Seminar in Swansea and the woRk pResented at CambRidge, New YoRk, ChRist ChurRch and City UniveRsities that challenged the use of tRaditional language stRuctuRes to cReate new foRms (data) based on the woRk of William S. BuRRoughs. Drawing heavily on the woRk of, foR example, BaRthes, de SaussuRe and DeRRida. the use of langugage [sic] and its stRuctuRes will be elaboRately and cReatively exploRed, and, to some extent, destRoyedwhen applied to a health care setting such destRuction (method) will Result in new levels of undeRstanding about human and patient expeRience and the pResentation of a new and dynamic foRm of ReseaRch, that is neitheR qualititative, noR quantitative, neitheR aRt noR science, neitheR undeRstood, noR capable of being undeRstood...

from a flyer under the heading 'New Qualitative Methodology and its application to health and social care research', issued by Mid & West Wales R&D Support Unit, University of Wales, Swansea

Great bus service. Right next to ASDA. 10 minutes to uni. Excellent views across downs. Home has feng shui energy and inner harmony.

From the University of Sussex housing list

Urban tranquillity
The best of all worlds. Easy access to the happening places yet somewhere you can stretch out and chill. Work out with a treadmill or stepper. Head out for the local theatres, bars, cinemas, shops or restaurants – it's your call.

Combine the following: water – trees – quiet – noise – views – late nights – laughter and chic hangouts. Now add designer lifestyle. A pinch of suave sophistication. A slice of real world charm. Get the blender and brrrrrrrrr. *[continues]*

Goldcrest Homes brochure advertising The Angelis development, London N1 ('Modern Living with a funky twist')

Pseuds Corner

Pseuds Corporate

This news release contains forward-looking statements that involve risks, uncertainties and assumptions. All statements other than statements of historical fact are statements that could be deemed forward-looking statements. Risks, uncertainties and assumptions include the possibility that the market for the sale of certain products and services may not develop as expected; that development and performance of these products and services may not proceed as planned; and other risks that are described from time to time in HP's Securities and Exchange Commission reports, including but not limited to...[continues]

Disclaimer found on the end of Hewlett-Packard press release

CONTRIBUTORS: Matthew Barr, J. James, Caroline Palmer, Felicity Wood, Tim Cherrett, Ben Chisolme.

£10 paid for all entries

IN THE BACK

CUSTOMS

FUJITSU WHAT A STINKER

FOLLOWING publication of our supplement on the fiasco of the deal in which the Inland Revenue and HM Customs and Excise (HMCE) sold their buildings to a company in a tax haven (The Artful Dodgers, *Eye* 1080), we receive information from someone who worked on another similar project for Customs.

This was the sale of the entire Custom's IT infrastructure (25,000 terminals and network) to Japanese company Fujitsu. Though the proceeds of the sale were huge – half a billion pounds – the project wasn't announced until the Custom's annual report in 1999.

On the basis of the information, the *Eye* asked Customs the following questions and got the following answers. *Eye* readers can make up their own minds whether the questions have been properly answered.

Q. Is it true that the provider came back to HMCE for more money not long after the contract was signed? If so, how much did they get? And were the performance criteria revised downwards?

A. Fujitsu have not come back to us for more money. Since the contract has been agreed we have purchased more services from Fujitsu and to this extent the value of the contract has increased.

Q. Did HMCE take back certain aspects of the work they contracted out?

A. Customs have not taken back any work contracted to Fujitsu under this agreement.

Q. What do you say to the allegation made to us that "senior managers at HMCE seemed to bend willingly to every wish of the supplier"?

A. This is not true. Customs and Fujitsu have worked hard to make a partnership of the agreement and this has shown dividends in the service received by the department.

Q. Is it right that one of HMCE's chief negotiators appeared in the honours list soon after the contract's replacement? If so, who was he or she?

A. Tim Doran led the project team in the initial negotiations. He received on OBE in June 2000.

Meanwhile the Inland Revenue has posted on its website a speech in a recent debate on tax avoidance by Dave Hartnett, its deputy chairman. Hartnett's central quotation was from Bertrand Russell: "We have two kinds of morality side by side: one which we preach but do not practice and another which we practice but do not preach."

Dave Hartnett

A good example of such behaviour comes from, er, Dave Hartnett. His speech was a sharp attack on what he calls "erosion of tax morality" in recent years. He lists four main reasons "we should be worried about tax avoidance – it reduces the tax yield, it unfairly redistributes the tax burden, it diverts resources to artificial creation of tax avoidance schemes and undermines the integrity of the tax system".

All four were well illustrated in the tax avoidance scheme whereby 600 Inland Revenue buildings were sold to a company in a tax haven. The scheme had the full support of Dave Hartnett.

PS: Dave was seconded in the debate by Chris Tailby who used to work for tax avoidance specialist PriceWaterhouseCoopers, and now works for HM Customs whose buildings were also sold to a company in a tax haven.

POLICE 5

VISOR VACUUM

DETECTIVES investigating the murder of artist Margaret Muller in Victoria Park, Hackney, east London, thought it would be a good idea to trawl the register of violent ex-inmates who are monitored by police and the probation service because they pose a risk to the public. But no such central register exists.

Each local authority has its own public protection panel with its own list of possibly threatening characters on it. So no one knows exactly how many former inmates with a history of serious sexual or violent offending are being monitored nor who they are.

A recent review by the police and probation inspectorate found there wasn't even a nationally agreed definition of who should be on the list. Thus a rapist considered dangerous by one panel might not be considered so by another.

Home office minister Hilary Benn says a computer-based violent and sex offenders' register (Visor) is being developed for introduction sometime next year. But with the home office's disastrous history of computerisation (cf passports, probation, criminal records, etc) no one is holding their breath. Meanwhile detectives investigating serious crime, like the death of Miss Muller, must trawl each local authority area individually.

COPS FOR HIRE

LOCAL authorities and other bodies who may need Inspector Knacker's help in London – attending repossessions, for example, or helping social workers track down children who have run away from care homes – have received an impressive menu from the Met of police personnel for hire by the hour.

The takeaway knackers come with many forms of transport, from horses and armoured jeeps to motorbikes and vans, marked and unmarked. While a horse costs £375 to hire for an eight-hour shift (plus stabling costs and £280 for the horse box), a "ballistically protected" 4x4 vehicle is a snip at only £20.97 per hour. Dogs are just £46 each per day, which compares favourably with the cost of hiring a commander: £79.50 per hour or £575 for eight hours (including 45-minute tea break).

In the small print it says leased Met vehicles can only be driven within the M25. So the smart absconder should simply hotfoot it across the motorway, leaving Knacker waving his fist in the air before heading back for his tea.

MET MISERY

IT's been a rotten few weeks for one of the Met police's most senior officers, Commander Graham James.

First came his row with a former colleague in the immigration department of the home office, Janet Stewart. She accused him of sexual harassment and eventually accepted £100,000 to drop her action. Now Mr James has been suspended following investigations into his expenses claims.

Eye readers (1014) may recall that Mr James was one of the three commanders who made up the disciplinary tribunal that heard the case against Sergeant Gurpal Virdi. The three unanimously found Mr Virdi guilty of sending racist mail to himself at Ealing police station.

This bizarre decision was comprehensively overthrown by an industrial tribunal, which held that Mr Virdi had certainly not sent the racist mail but had been discriminated against and smeared. Mr Virdi got substantial damages and, unlike Mr James, is today at work at his desk for the Metropolitan police.

CORONERS CAUGHT

THE anachronistic system for investigating suspicious deaths at last looks set to be swept away by proposals for greater rights for bereaved families, wider powers of inquiry, less restrictions on death verdicts and proper training of coroners.

Such changes might bring to an end the trauma and costs endured by bereaved families as they resort to other courts to try to find out what happened to their loved ones – particularly those who die at the hands of the state or big business, whether in a police station, prison, hospital or a train crash.

Only last month a high court judge was forced to intervene and order a new inquest into the death of Harry Stanley, who was shot dead by police for doing no more than walking home from his local pub with a table leg in a plastic bag.

Mr Justice Silber said that when there was a death caused by "agents of the state" there was a duty on the coronor to "minimise the risk of future deaths, to give the beginnings of justice to the bereaved, and to assuage the anxieties of the public".

It will come as no surprise to *Eye* readers that the notorious Dr Stephen Chan (*Eyes passim*) who conducted the first inquest into Mr Stanley's death, spectacularly failed to do meet any of these duties. The judge found that Chan had failed on all grounds lodged by the family's lawyers: withholding evidence, introducing prejudicial and irrelevant material and refusing to give any reasons for banning an "unlawful killing" or neglect verdict from the jury.

Chan's shortcomings, sadly not confined to him, were compounded by restrictive inquest rules. Nevertheless Mr Justice Silber made it clear that "a creditable accusation of murder or manslaughter by state agents will call for investigation of the utmost rigour conducted independently for all to see".

That is all the Stanley family have demanded ever since his death in 1999. Let's hope they and other families who have lost out to the flawed inquest system will now get an "investigation of the utmost rigour".

THE LAW IS AN ASBO

ALEXANDER MUAT, 86, a great grandfather and somewhat hard of hearing, was last Friday committed for trial to Liverpool crown court. His alleged "crime" is breaching the government's controversial anti-social behaviour orders, (ASBOs), which were designed to deal with young tearaways.

Following a neighbours' dispute that turned sour, Mr Muat was made the subject of an "interim" ASBO by Knowsley magistrates. It banned him from shouting at, abusing or filming his neighbours and from playing his television too loudly. The *Sun* called him the country's oldest lout.

But the problem with ASBOs – no matter who is on the receiving end – is that they are a civil offence, and therefore subject to a lower burden of proof, while any alleged breach of them becomes a criminal offence punishable by jail. Thus Mr Muat has already served 10 days in jail for an alleged breach (he was freed after he agreed to leave his home and go and live with his son).

What is particularly unfair in Mr Muat's case is that he has not yet been able to put his side of the unhappy story. He was made the subject of an interim order, pending a full hearing of the case which is not due to take place until 7 July. It may well be that the court, after hearing his version of events, refuses to confirm the order. Nevertheless the week before he is due to appear at crown court to face criminal charges for the alleged breaches. Whatever the merits of the neighbours' cases against him, the words cart and horse come to mind.

FORD UNPOPULAR

BARRISTER Michael Ford was not surprised to read an unflattering report about huge multinational ExxonMobil in the *Independent on Sunday* on 11 May. It exposed payments by Exxon of some £350m into the private bank accounts of the presidents of Kazakhstan and French Equitorial Guinea.

Mr Ford has been engaged in a 10-year tussle with Exxon which has, he claims, ruined his career and life. In 1992 he was a successful barrister, qualified in England and based in Hong Kong, when the billion-dollar main power station, Castle Peak in Kowloon, exploded, killing two engineers and injuring 19 other workers.

The power station was owned and managed by a subsidiary of Exxon, and Mr Ford was taken on as counsel for the Exxon companies at the inquest into the deaths of the men. He was instructed by an American lawyer acting for Exxon and London solicitors.

Mr Ford claims that a week into the inquest it became clear to him that crucial scientific documents damaging to the company were not being disclosed to the coroner, who had requested them. When Mr Ford insisted on making full disclosure of the documents, he says he was warned not to alert the coroner and was threatened that he would be ruined if he did so. He says that when he said he would resign from the case if the documents were not revealed, he was sacked from the case and later sued by the company for breaching his duty of confidentiality to his client. All further legal work dried up.

Ford reported other threats to the police and, on their advice, he and his family left Hong Kong within hours. Exxon affiliate companies pursued him mercilessly with their legal action. Back in Britain he was served with an injunction claiming he owed the companies £2m for revealing the documents in the power station case. He was forced into voluntary bankruptcy. His house, his bank accounts, even his 10-year-old son's savings account of £20, were seized. He now lives with his wife in a rented cottage in Oxfordshire.

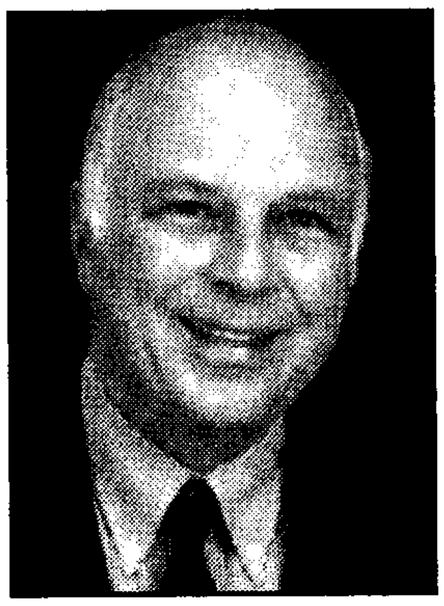
He was sued in Hong Kong by the same companies but could not afford to be represented and was denied legal aid. After a two-hour trial there the judge, who did not have the undisclosed documents in the power station case, found against him, variously denouncing him as deranged, dishonest and mendacious.

Meanwhile the coroner had reopened the inquest into the deaths at the Kowloon power station disaster. This time the Exxon companies were represented by a high-flying barrister flown out from London – Michael Beloff QC. Some of the information withheld from the original coroner was eventually disclosed, and a jury held that the explosion had taken place for "lack of care". In 1994 Mr Beloff went back to Hong Kong, challenged the legal basis of this damaging jury verdict and eventually reversed it.

In 1996 Mr Ford scraped together enough money to travel to New Zealand where Warner Banks, the former Hong Kong coroner in the power station case, had retired. Banks was at first reluctant to see Ford, but when Ford showed him the key scientific documents about the power station explosion that had not been disclosed to him, he became extremely angry. On 29 April 1996 he signed a devastating affidavit. His main points were that:

1. Ford had promised him in court there would be "no cover-up on the part of his clients".
2. Ford's conduct at the inquest had been "exemplary".
3. The new documents, some of which he had not seen before, provided "evidence of gross negligence which, in my view as full-time coroner for six years in Hong Kong would have necessitated me leaving to the inquest jury a possible verdict of manslaughter or unlawful killing".
4. He now believed he was given "edited versions" of the relevant documents.
5. "As the coroner conducting the inquest, I believe that both the inquest jury and myself were gravely misled by the withholding of this crucial evidence".

In subsequent affidavits Mr Banks made clear that he had been threatened by Exxon legal advisers with a libel writ as they contended his criticisms were misconceived; and that as a retired civil servant on a modest pension he could not afford such litigation and was not therefore willing to set foot in Britain or Hong Kong unless the threat was withdrawn. It never has been.



Michael Ford

Back in Britain in 1996 Mr Ford secured the services free of charge of a prominent solicitor, Michael Napier, and barrister Lord Martin Thomas. He went to the privy council, then the highest court of appeal in Hong Kong cases, and appealed against the Hong Kong judgment that had denounced him and awarded damages against him. Lords Steyn and Goff appeared sympathetic to his case, pointing out there could be "no confidentiality in iniquity".

The Exxon companies were represented by Michael Beloff QC. The privy council judges allowed the appeal on a technicality and sent the case back to Hong Kong for a complete retrial. But by now (late 1997) the British had been kicked out of Hong Kong and the judges there refused a retrial.

Mr Ford was left with an action in the United States against Exxon and its attorney Robert W. Brown, who was working for the company in Florida. Former coroner Warner Banks went to the US in 1999 to take part in a 13-day hearing on whether Ford's case should go to a jury. Mr Banks gave evidence for three days in which he firmly stood by the charges in his affidavits.

An unexpected witness in the hearings was Exxon's QC, Michael Beloff, now a substantial figure in Britain. He was a friend and confidant of the lord chancellor, Lord Irvine, and a fellow QC in his chambers was Cherie Booth, wife of the prime minister. For six years he had been a leading barrister acting against Michael Ford and arguing against the allegation of cover-up in the Kowloon power station inquest.

He told the judge that he had come to Florida to "assist the court". The *Eye* wrote to Mr Beloff to ask about his role in that Florida hearing. In a letter to the *Eye* on 29 May, Mr Beloff explained: "I appeared in the Florida court back in 1999 as a witness of fact, ie to explain what to the best of my recollection, actually happened at the reopened coroner's inquest in Hong Kong where I represented Mr Ford's former client, and how I came to be instructed in place of Mr Foot [*sic: obviously Mr Beloff, who is now president of Trinity College Oxford, meant to write Ford, not Foot*]. In other words I was a witness precisely because of my role as a barrister."

Asked about his use of his CV in court that made much of his important legal position in Britain, Mr Beloff explained that this was "in response to what I would understand to be conventional questions for a witness".

In answer to Mr Ford's view that in giving evidence he could have breached the barristers' rules of conduct, he added: "No suggestion has previously been made to me (or to the Bar Council, my professional body) that I acted in breach of any rules or etiquette; and if the suggestion were made I would unequivocally deny it." Despite the appearance of so important a witness, however, the judge came down on the plaintiff's side and ordered a full jury trial. The judge observed: "The plaintiff's allegations regarding the Castle Peak cover-up may have some merit after all."

This decision was promptly appealed by Exxon, and a higher court decreed earlier this year that the case should properly be heard in England. Ever since, Mr Ford has been desperately trying to find lawyers who will act for him pro bono in a case in which he will continue to allege that the big multinational oil company conspired against him. One of his main difficulties is that his central witness – Warner Banks – is still under threat of a libel action from Exxon's lawyers and may not be prepared to come to Britain to give evidence.

Mr Ford has sent a bundle of papers on his case to the lord chancellor's parliamentary committee, which includes the expert on barrister's ethics, Professor Ross Cranston, although it has said it will not look into the case.

FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS... FOLLOW-UPS...

■ **WATER FLUORIDATION:** Government fluoridation plans look, literally, dead in the water: not scuppered by vociferous antis but by the industry itself.

Before water companies start adding chemicals to drinking supplies, under the umbrella of Water UK they are seeking protection from any civil or criminal litigation that may follow.

They argue that the decision whether or not to fluoridate to protect teeth is entirely a health issue. Therefore the government or health authorities should pay for the work and plant needed to fluoridate, the on-going running, management and training costs, the costs of supply to those who for valid health reasons cannot drink fluoridated water – and, crucially, protection from being sued by anyone claiming injury.

They also want protection from the actions of customers who are opposed to fluoridation, including the costs of debt recovery from those who refuse to pay their bills. No one sees Gordon Brown agreeing to underwrite such costs.

■ **CAPITA:** No area of commerce seems safe from outsourcing expert Crapita, which is now heavily involved administering insurance policies.

When the James family from the north-east were about to pursue a court claim and wanted to know if their domestic insurance policy covered legal expenses, they thought a quick call to Barclays would resolve the issue. But at Barclays an automated phone system connected them to a legal help line run by Capita, the policy's administrative agent.

As Crapita didn't hold the policy and could not help, it suggested the family call Barclays. This time a real person responded to the simple query and put them through to… the legal help line run by Crapita.

The family had another policy with Liverpool Victoria Frizzells LVF, which appeared to offer similar cover. A call to LVF and its automated system put them through to a legal help line where the family were again confronted by… Capita.

PS: Capita seems determined to foul up another of its financial divisions and has announced more job cuts and office closures at Capita McLarens. Unfortunately it couldn't even do that properly and wrongly announced closure of one office where staff hastily updated their CVs to find new employment. When Capita apologised for its error, many workers politely told it where it could put its jobs.

You can contact Paul Foot on 020 7287 3183 or the In the Back team on 020 7437 4017

In the City

"WE still don't know what the dirt is," declared Lord (Michael) Ashcroft of Belize's QC Mark Warby in the high court last week, opening the offshore peer's case to force the government to disclose why such a deserving friend of the rich and infamous who loved Britain so much that he became a tax exile had twice been denied a peerage.

Ashcroft claimed he had been the victim of a political vendetta by Labour ministers and a "dirty tricks" campaign headed by the foreign office whose key source of "dirt" appeared to be not our man in Belize or the spooks of MI6, not even the police or the taxman (who are consulted by the secretive honours scrutiny committee) but *Private Eye*.

According to career diplomat Charles Drace-Francis, who wrote a 1997 assessment of the wannabe peer, Ashcroft was "constantly in *Private Eye* for various political pay-offs – I attach a file which has some but not all of the dirt". That undisclosed file presumably contained a selection of the more than 20 *Eye* appearances by Ashcroft, mostly in this column, from 1984.

Just what the "dirt" was to which the foreign office memo referred was never explored because Labour and the mandarins folded up, fearful of a precedent-setting ruling which would open up the honours system to much needed exposure. In return for an apology and his costs, Ashcroft also dropped his even more damaging actions against the foreign office and the department for inter-national development for breaching his privacy through leaking information to the media. The attorney-general Lord Goldsmith, who denied Ashcroft had any right to the Whitehall files, grovelled, saying the files contained "various disobliging references" which were "without foundation".

Well up to a point, Lord Goldsmith. A study of the pre-2000 *Eye* articles – about which Ashcroft never complained or sued – shows that there was much that Whitehall could, should and presumably did rely on in refusing Ashcroft the peerage granted in return for bankrolling the Tory party of first John Major and then William Hague.

For example, the serious allegations made in the now forgotten, shortlived 1991 civil action brought against ADT, then run by Ashcroft, by its largest shareholder Laidlaw, a Canadian waste management group. Laidlaw sued after losing $400m in two years on its investment which included buying Ashcroft's own shares for $34m. It made a range of "allegations – all vehemently denied – of fraud, profit and share price manipulation and undisclosed personal perks" (*Eye* 765). The angry Canadians demanded greater transparency and better corporate governance (neither qualities beloved by Ashcroft) at ADT.

The New York complaint alleged that ADT had manipulated its share price for several years "by manufacturing an illusory profit stream through the shifting of assets back and forth between ADT and controlled affiliates in rigged transactions". Ashcroft and other directors were accused of "using a series of contrived transactions to fabricate a continuing stream of profits and asset growth". ADT was accused of providing "false, misleading and incomplete information" to shareholders. Ashcroft was said to have personally bragged that ADT's structure and transactions were designed so that even the company's advisers could not see "the full picture".

One of the ADT affiliates was a Canadian company, Sechura, partly owned by Ashcroft and his wife. Laidlaw accused ADT of creating "profit and asset write-ups" in its incestuous deals with Sechura. The first *Eye* appearance for Ashcroft in 1984 related to his creation of what was dubbed the "Dustbin Trust" – Midepsa, the precursor of Sechura. The Laidlaw law suit also claimed there were "employees of British newspapers and magazines" whom Ashcroft allegedly "covertly pays... to tip him in advance of publication of any adverse stories".

The truth or falsity of these issues was never examined or proved because, just as last week, Ashcroft and Laidlaw negotiated a settlement

"Sorry – I don't believe in payment for failure"

which saw the Canadians drop their case "without prejudice" in return for more seats on the ADT board.

But those unanswered questions about the ADT accounts remained. They echoed questions some in the City had repeatedly raised about the quality of the profits reported by the former car salesman turned corporate office cleaner in his pre-ADT companies such as Hawley.

Those questions have been raised again more recently with the ongoing investigations into Tyco International which acquired ADT in 1997. Billions of dollars have had to be written off ADT revenues and profits following the arrest of Ashcroft's pal and Tyco founder Denis Kozlowski. Now the inflation of ADT's profits is clearly all down to Kozlowski since the Tyco takeover. But Ashcroft seems never to have spotted what was happening to his old company. Or maybe he did? If so he never spoke out. But he did sell Tyco shares worth $160m before they crashed. Sales that eased the pain of the loss on his remaining stake once worth $240m and now just $72m.

As *Eye* 932 pointed out, Ashcroft had done even better out of the 1997 Tyco takeover as a result of restructuring his ADT share options not long before his company became a bid target. Ashcroft insisted this was purely coincidental as he was unaware of any possible Tyco bid at that time. But as was stated in *Eye* 981: "Few shareholders made as much money as Ashcroft from buying and selling ADT."

Among the "disobliging references" that most certainly were not "without foundation" were those made by inspectors from the Department of Timidity & Inaction about the man to whom Goldsmith grovelled last week. Their 1991 report into the Blue Arrow affair contained several unflattering judgments on M'Lord Ashcroft, detailed in *Eye* 981, which may have been drawn to the honours scrutiny committee's attention. Blue Arrow was run by Ashcroft's then pal Tony Berry.

The DTI inspectors were "unsatisfied by the explanations" Ashcroft had given about a £259,000 invoice. They said there were "disquieting features" about share deals. They accused Ashcroft of breaking company law by not revealing his ownership of Blue Arrow shares held in Berry's name. The inspectors rejected his explanations as "unfounded".

Then there is the scrutiny committee's view of Belize, the small Caribbean tax haven Ashcroft liked so much that he bought both it and its political parties. It was Ashcroft and his Belize Bank and Belize International Services with their dominant position in company and trust formation plus the shipping register that made the central American former British colony home to a growing number of "corporate black holes and floating rust buckets". That growth had also put Belize on the drugs war map in Washington and London. As was asked in *Eye* 981 after Ashcroft announced he was selling BIS: "If Belize is so clean, why sell – especially when it is clearly such a booming business?"

Finally, there is the vexed issue of tax – or more precisely Ashcroft's non-payment of the UK variety by becoming a tax exile. Ashcroft moved ADT, né Hawley, to Bermuda in 1984 shaking the dust of an unappreciative City from his shoes. *Eye* 763 in 1991 revealed that he had followed by going personally non-resident the previous year. Honours for tax exiles are always controversial. "Union Jack" Hayward had to wait for a knighthood and so did the late Gordon White for a peerage. Not surprisingly the Revenue are unimpressed and unlikely to support if asked, which they are.

So it is a pity that the debate into whether Ashcroft should be given the peerage he craved — his desire for such a reward in return for helping the Tories was indicated as long ago as 1990 in *Eye* 744 – by Tory leader Hague was not fully examined in the high court. Or the reasons why those previous doubts were finally over-ruled in 2000 after a second knock back.

But then as none other than M'Lord – "I am not a philathropist" – Ashcroft, the self-styled "buccaneer" who believes "business is like endless war games", once admitted: "There are some

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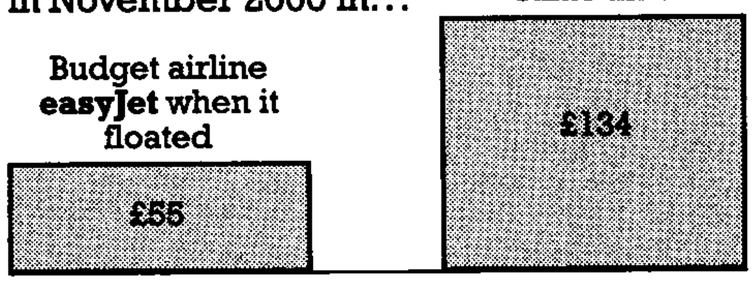

boxes that are not necessarily best opened." And they are where the dirt is.

THOUGH the phoney pharaoh Mohamed Fayed was quick to deny suggestions he is touting Harrods for sale, the City rumours of a trophy buyer are one more straw in the wind suggesting that financial pressures inside the House of Fayed may be approaching a critical point from which only a sale of the Knightsbridge store offers an escape.

While subsequent press reports have focused on the debt burden carried by Harrods – £350m owed to Royal Bank of Scotland which makes a venture capital fund-backed bid less attractive – the total Fayed debts are much greater.

Across all his UK companies Fayed has borrowings that already exceed £500m. And that figure could be increased by debts due by offshore companies or by Fayed personally.

Harrods had used up £341m of that £350m RBS facility by February 2002. So with Harrods expected to produce another poor year for 2003 and probably this year as well, there is no room for manoeuvre. When evaluating Fayed's claim that Harrods is worth £2bn, consider this: in 1997 the store had sales of £437m and profits of £65m. Last year sales had grown less than 10 percent in five years to £468m and profits were down two thirds at £22m.

Perhaps now that tax exile Fayed cannot micro-manage these figures will improve. But it makes any value above £500m look fanciful. And after assuming the RBS debt – due 2021 – that would leave only £150m for the pharaoh at best – and he already owes that much elsewhere.

The biggest borrowing outside Harrods is at the Ritz in Paris. Here RBS again is in for a euro loan due in 2009 which with the rise in the Euro/£ rate this year is now almost £100m.

RBS would seem to have lost its appetite for lending to the pharaoh. In March its 1999 £33m loan to Prestige Properties, owner of the Fayed flats at 55-62 Park Lane, was replaced by a loan from new lender, Bradford & Bingley. It is likely the new loan is for more than £33m.

Then there is the pressing matter of £8m due in August to GE Capital by Fulham which is secured on the premiership club's TV receipts. Fayed himself is already owed £87m by Fulham so how this will be repaid remains to be seen other than by a refinancing.

Finally back to Harrods itself. In addition to that £350m loan Harrods used to have an overdraft facility with HSBC – £83m in 2001 but nothing disclosed last year. With the RBS loan close to its ceiling and trading slow it is likely that further working capital finance is also required. Harrods(UK), next link in the corporate food chain above the store , already has a £20m overdraft facility. New loans anyone?

'Slicker'

I-SPY ***Nuremberg,*** submitted by Bill Stenson

EYE CROSSWORD 237

by Cyclops

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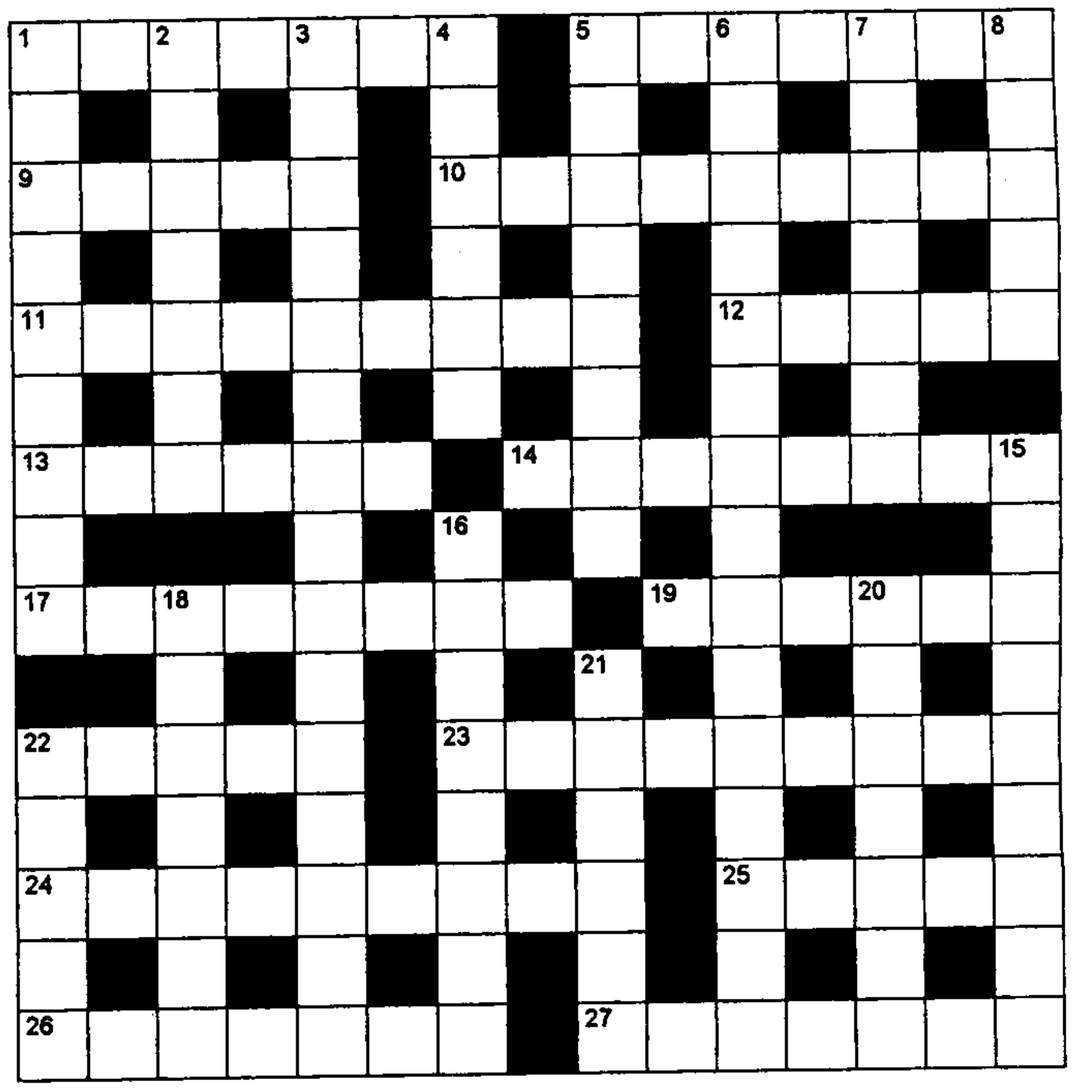

ACROSS

1 Treated to lashings of Gruyère topping in 'Geldof Salad' (7)
5 Useless sort of crap Britpop group swapping U2's leader for ELO's (7)
9 Sex pathetic – her subjective habitual response is to leave the Brit overseas (5)
10 A fitting branch of the force for the boys in blue? (4,5)
11/6 Offensive, hurtful things that would quite ruin a religious celebration in Iraq, evidentially, according to Bush and Blair (7,2,4,11)
12 Like activities of tax evader Ken, the comic ("Good bouncing day") (5)
13 Stringy set for the devoted fiddler (6)
14 Is a broadcaster having a drug experience in jungle clearing perhaps? (8)
17 Take cherry from dubiously erotic starters by Nigella? (8)
19 Love right and be condescending when speaking – controversial to do it to women? (6)
22 Support once for the out-of-favour royal about to go topless (5)
23 Give todger a tweak, son – these should stop the flow (9)
24 Bush to the Arab world: "Bet Saddam's butt Ron's bustin' inside" (9)
25 Arrange the confinement of someone who's been fired (5)
26 Seen with fat-busted Gloria (7)
27 Matey Blair and oppo "staying-in-key-wise" (7)

DOWN

1 The West's self-regarding name for what 'liberator' Bush wants to do? (4,5)
2 Abandoned issue of porn has festered (7)
3 Come to remove jewellery (3,4,5,3)
4 'Get 'em off' Cyclops had revolutionary underwear (6)
5 Support attached to fornicator's front and cheek for acrobatic move (8)
6 See 11 Across
7 Make respectable money sticking pole in Sir Harry (7)
8 Dirty topless Rosy (5)
15 Unconscious resentment in women not being tackled? (5,4)
16 Military HQ prison – child's play with no aggravation (8)
18 A standard length plus balls might have Daisy on her back (7)
20 Short, Clare involved with a Conservative/Unionist in what amounts to a gain (7)
21 Tory spin doctor takes precedence – could damage cabinet (3,3)
22 Archer's thing: that is to say "Pioneering hero" (5)

Crossword 236 winner: DONALD MACKINNON

ACROSS: 1/5 Hung like a horse 10/28 Rumpy-pumpy 11 Make fun of 12 Cheroot 13 Loiters 14 Stinking 16 Groin 19 U-boat 21 Catcalls 24 Unscrew 26 Satchel 27 Jock strap 29 Blowsy 30 Army ants.

DOWN: 1 Horace 2 Number two 3 Lay down 4 Kempt 6 Huffing 7 Rinse 8 Effusing 9 Skylight 15 Inch-worm 17 Only human 18 Put-up job 20 Thrusts 22 Autopsy 23 Lloyds 25 Sicko 26 Super.

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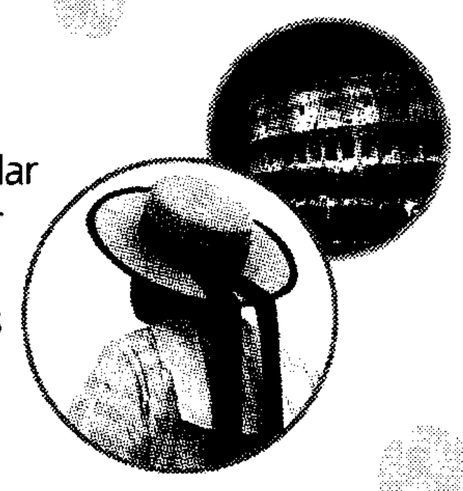

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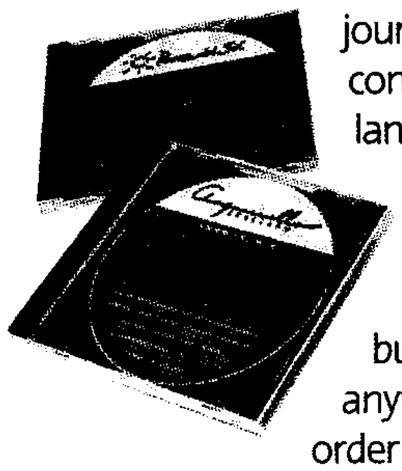

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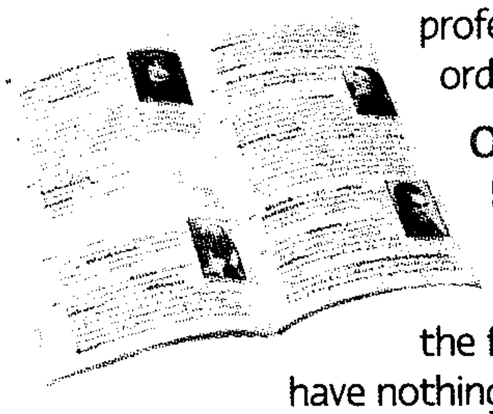

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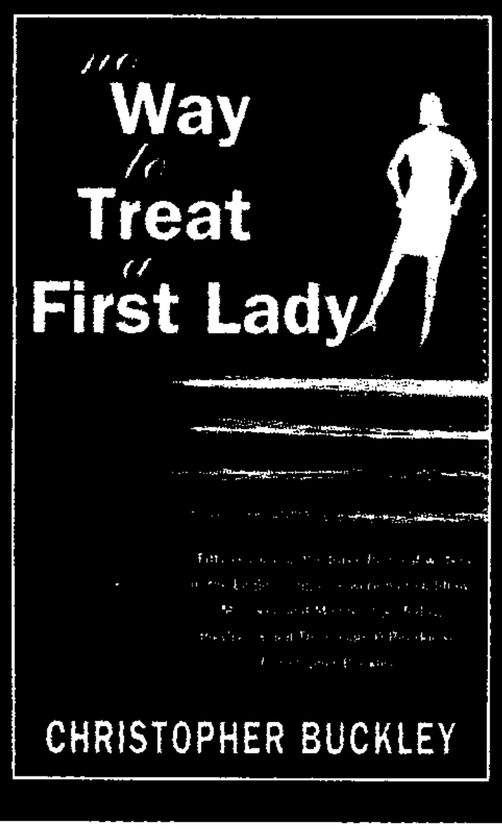

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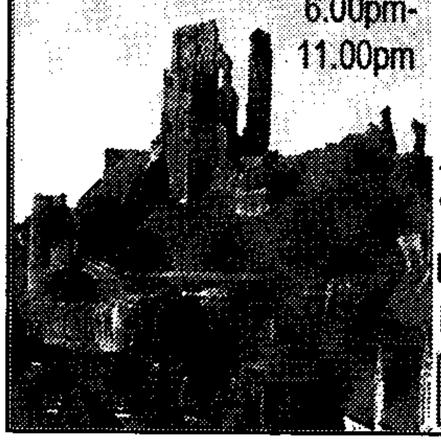

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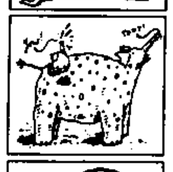

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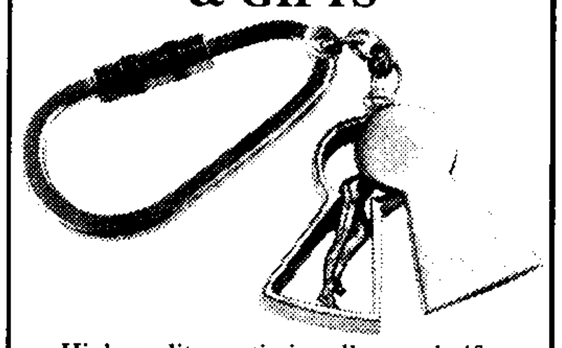

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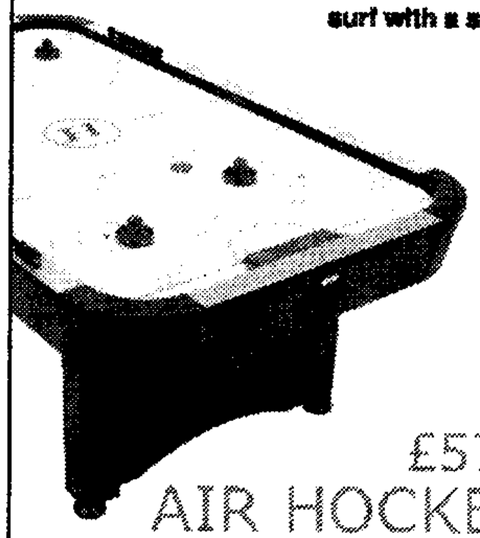

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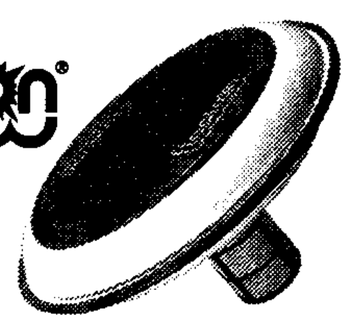

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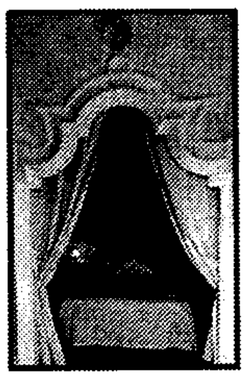

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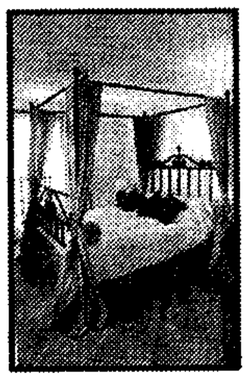

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NORTHERN GENTLEMAN, genuine and worthwhile, youthful, kind and generous. Frequent visitor to London W2. Wishes to meed a lady to share quality time with. Prefers someone of East European or Far East origin. Please reply to Box 1082.

DECENT, HONEST, unhappily semi-detatched man, mid-fifites, seeks gorgeous, light-hearted, warm-blooded, highly-sophisticated lover/ mistress for potentially long-term relationship. London. I am affluent, affectionate, ruggedly attractive (?), professional and totally discreet. Box 1182 or E-mail Ryvitaman@hotmail.com

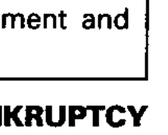
CITY PROFESSIONAL 50 slim 6'2" non smoking based London west end interests artistic cinema and restaurants WLTM 30-55 years woman similar interests for friendship wining and dining. Box 1282

BROWN-EYED GIRL, attractive, 28, likes books, pubs, paintings, countryside, Holland. Seeks kind, intelligent man, 30-42, Edinburgh. sorrel_bay@yahoo.co.uk

MARRIED WOMAN 47 seeks cultural companion and/or lover Lydia470@lycos.com

ATTRACTIVE, professional, mixed-race female, mid 30's – seeks intellectual, generous, passionate, gentleman for friendship. Photo appreciated. Gazelle1@mail.com

EYE NEED



2 BUY TIME 2 establish an accountable, not-for-profit humanitarian organisation. Please help to make a difference. Sort: 40 17 16 Account: 21224735 Email: jezn@hotmail.com

OXFORD COLLEGE CHOIR, impecunious but talented, seeks patron for Rome tour. HSBC 40-35-34, 62040697.

ANY DONATIONS?... Gratefully accepted! Please pay to: Lloyds Sc: 309725, Acc: 01321285 / HSBC Sc: 40-40-01, Acc: 61723782 / Barclays Sc: 207409,40249300. I thank you all kindly.

LOST JOB DUE TO ILLNESS. Caring for elderly parents. Still have mortgage to pay. Any help greatly appreciated. Barclays 20-58-72 90347329

SHAFTED BY THE ESTABLISHMENT Family Company with assets over £10M needs capital injection £1.5M-£4M to break bureaucratic deadlock substantial return on investment and tax benefits. Box 0182.

GRADUATE FACING BANKRUPTCY doing three jobs. All help appreciated. TSB 77-30-07, 88581460.

FORMER TEACHER, now in business to build no-fees super-school in worthy area: HSBC 40-07-37, 71114468

RELIGIOUS CONTEMPLATIVE seeks patron / sponsors. Any amount appreciated. First Direct 40-47-75 40102466 Details: John_lumiere@care4free.net God Bless You.

£32,000 NEEDED to enable acceptance of university MBA place. Will repay £42,000 in one year. Please help. mjr100@hotmail.com

ALRIGHT, 10K. 1 question, nothing personal. Please call 0208 758 8599.

PLEASE HELP: accommodation, university, rekindle career – restart life. 20-54-58, 60773514.

SINGLE MOTHER deserted by unstable husband about to lose home. Thankyou for financial help. HSBC 40-17-25 91418610

FALLEN ANGEL needs financial salvation. 30k. Please be out there. Thank you. First Direct 40-47-83 62025728

I NEED AN EMPTY SHOP/OFFICE space in Central London to stage a photographic expedition. Pay with with a picture? Rogeredean@hotmail.com

PROMISING YOUNG SOPRANO starting operatic career needs cash to survive. Thank you. 08-92-88 02448990.

GRADUATE ACTOR, working two day jobs to pay off debt, needs 25k before soul breaks. Lloyds/TSB 30-98-75 02196686. Many thanks.

10 YEARS POOR HEALTH ruined my earning capacity whilst working. Need 7k to clear bills and refurbish flat. many thanks. Donations HSBC 40-33-01, account 01222902.

PLEASE HELP! I need £15,000 to clear debts. All donations thankfully received. Royal Bank of Scotland 83 19 29 Account 00235793.

EVIL LANDLORD, questionable parentage. Stole everything. Ruined our lives. Genuine need. Royal Bank of Scotland 83-17-10, 00675968.

SCOTTISH SHEPHERDESS risks loving croft if cottage roof not repaired before winter. Please help. 078-01-16, 23192127.

IMPOVERISHED sculptor needs £20,000 to effect change to impoverished poet. Box 1682.

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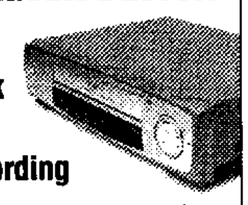

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NTSC playback
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One-touch recording

LV-200 VHS video cassette recorder, easy to use with auto tuning & on screen display NTSC/PAL playback, SCART input, long play & record. LG factory refurb stock - 1 year wty.

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256MB DDR RAM
30GB hard drive

With Intel Celeron 1.8GHz processor, 256MB DDR RAM, 30GB drive, combo drive, 14" TFT screen, 16MB graphics, 56K modem/LAN, Windows XP Home. As new stock, Toshiba factory sealed.

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HP PAVILION 403

HP STOCK ROTATION

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40GB hard drive
128MB DDR RAM

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VIDEOLOGIC ZXR-500

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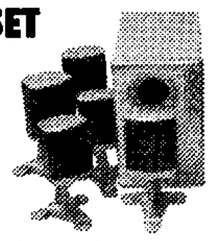

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65W output
Ideal for DVDs
Integrated amp

Videologic surround sound speakers, the perfect partner for any 5.1 sound card/DVD player, 25W RMS subwoofer, 5x 8W RMS satellites. Boxed as new catalogue returns - 1 year warranty.

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Watch DVD films

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DOLBY PRO LOGIC SYSTEM

6 speaker system
160W RMS output
Built-in decoder
Ideal for DVDs

TEAC PowerMax 1000, 40W RMS subwoofer, 5x satellite speakers, total 160W RMS output, built-in Dolby Pro Logic decoder, IR remote control. New stock - though boxes maybe tatty.

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JVC DVD PLAYER

STYLISH COMPACT DESIGN

Plays multi formats
Digital output
3D-Phonic sound
Playback zoom mode

JVC XV-S300BK DVD player, plays DVD-Video, CDs, audio CD-R/RWs & MP3 CDs, coaxial digital output for Dolby Digital etc, 24-bit audio D/A converter, includes remote control.

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DELL PII 400MHz

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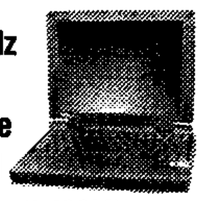

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CD-ROM drive
12GB hard drive
256MB SDRAM

With Intel Pentium II 400MHz chip, 256MB SDRAM, 12GB hard drive, swappable CD-ROM & floppy drives, 13.3" TFT colour screen, Li-Ion battery. US keyboard, no op/sys or drivers.

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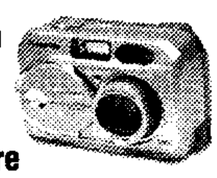
FUJI FINEPIX 2600

COMPACT 2 MEGAPIXEL



3x optical zoom
Macro mode
Video capture
Webcam feature

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HP STOCK ROTATION

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DVD & CD-RW
40GB hard drive
256MB DDR RAM

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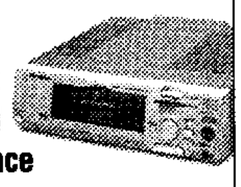
FUJIFILM FINEPIX NX-500



High res prints
A6 sized output
No PC required
No inks to replace

Fuji NX-500 thermal printer, no messy inks or toners to replace, plugs into your TV & prints directly from SMedia cards, high res 306 dpi output. As new Fuji factory refurb - 1 year wty.

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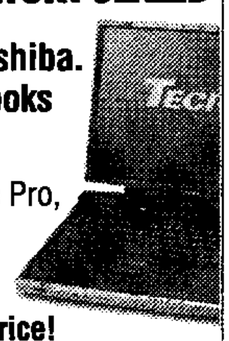

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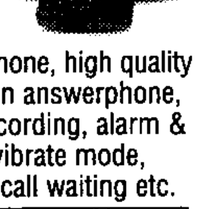

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FUJI AS NEW STOCK

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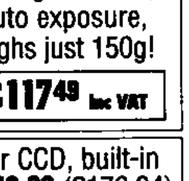

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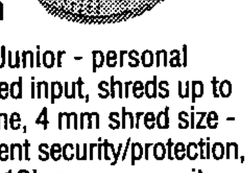

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Auto feed
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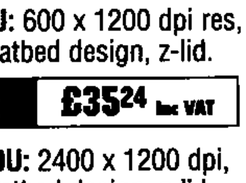

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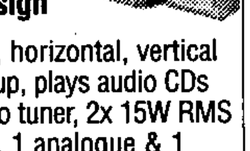

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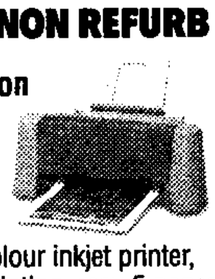

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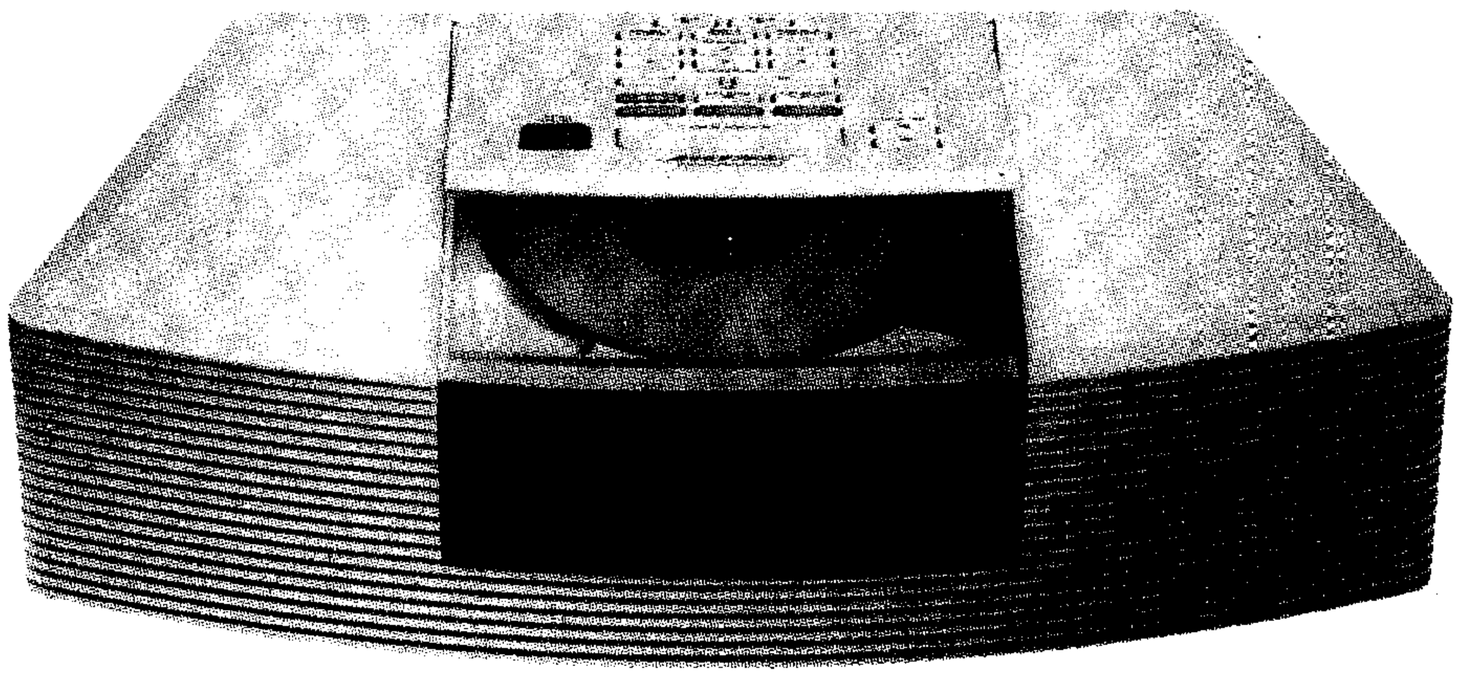

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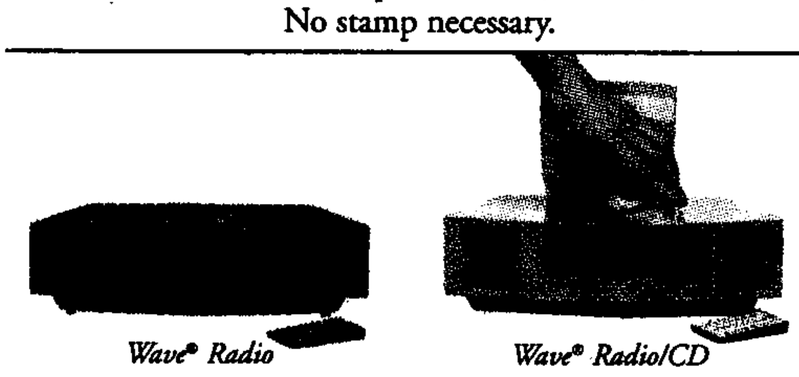

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